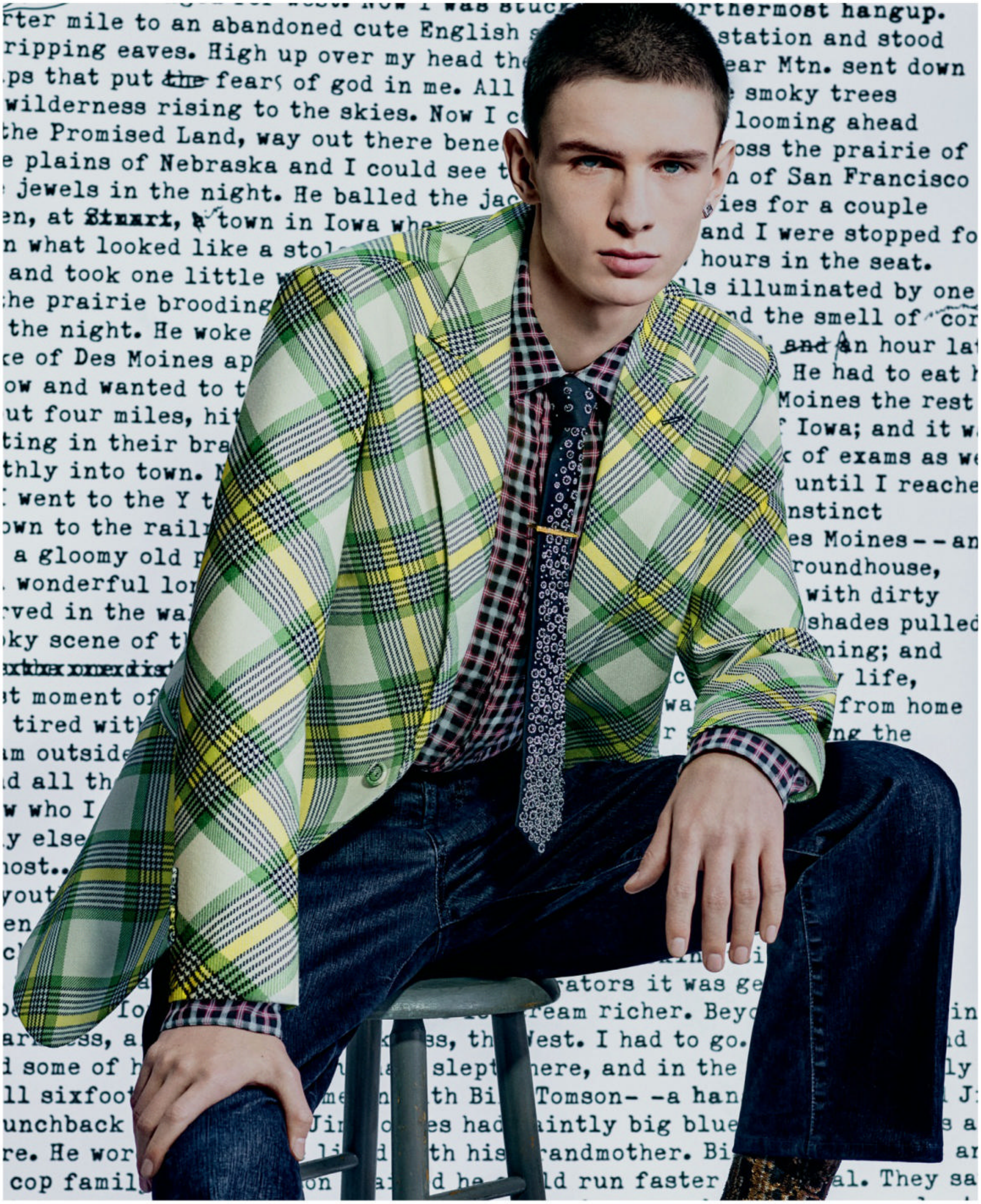
SUMMER 2022 £6

Esquire

ELVIS LIVES! MICK BROWN ON THE RETURN OF THE KING / SUNGLASSES / REWILDING / ANDREW O'HAGAN MEETS THE QUEEN / WE ♥ THE 90S SWEATSHIRTS / CAMERAS / BRITAIN'S MOST INFLUENTIAL ARTIST / WATCHES / LOTUS GOES BIG / TOM CRUISE AT 60 / ROGER, RAFA AND PEP THE BEST HAM SANDWICH IN THE WORLD / A BOY AT WAR / DANNY BOYLE ON THE SEX PISTOLS / FICTION BY GILES FODEN / LAGER, LAGER, LAGER


rter mile to an abandoned cute English
ripping eaves. High up over my head the
ps that put the fears of god in me. All
wilderness rising to the skies. Now I c
the Promised Land, way out there bene
e plains of Nebraska and I could see t
jewels in the night. He balled the jac
en, at Stuart, a town in Iowa whe
n what looked like a stol
and took one little w
he prairie brooding
the night. He woke
ce of Des Moines ap
ow and wanted to t
ut four miles, hit
ting in their bra
thly into town. M
went to the Y t
own to the railr
a gloomy old p
wonderful lon
rved in the wai
oky scene of th
t moment of
tired with
am outside
d all th
w who I
y else
host..
yout
en
c
rthermost hangup.
station and stood
ear Mtn. sent down
smoky trees
looming ahead
oss the prairie of
n of San Francisco
ies for a couple
and I were stopped fo
hours in the seat.
lls illuminated by one
nd the smell of cor
and an hour lat
He had to eat h
Moines the rest
Iowa; and it wa
of exams as we
until I reache
nstinct
es Moines--an
roundhouse,
with dirty
shades pulled
ning; and
life,
from home
ng the
rators it was ge
ream richer. Beyo
ss, th West. I had to go.
slept here, and in the
th Bi Tomson- -a han
es had aintly big blue
th his randmother. Bi
d he ld run faster al. They sa
ar ess, a
d some of h
ll sixfoot
unchback
re. He wor
cop famil
on

dior.com – 020 7172 0172

Used by permission of the Jack Kerouac Estate and The Wylie Agency, LLC.

whole life was a hau
haunted l
the
merica, at the divid
e betwe
re, and maybe that's
happen
t
n. But I had to get
nd sto
to the old hotelkeepe
cing by t
and ice cream ---
tting
the ice cream
ess, the Wes
, slept th
with Bill
lmes had
with his
ed he
s All
d. «C
d Den
ey» Ha
when t
n the Roc
e gang. An
ll Tomson
plaid shirt ba
the whole en
co. Everybody
sun came out,
y ticket to Sa
e afternoon. E
nver streets.
d
come
l Neal

Christian Dior
DIOR

LOUIS VUITTON

PRADA

PRADA.COM

GUCCI
gucci.com
#GucciLoveParade

GIORGIO ARMANI

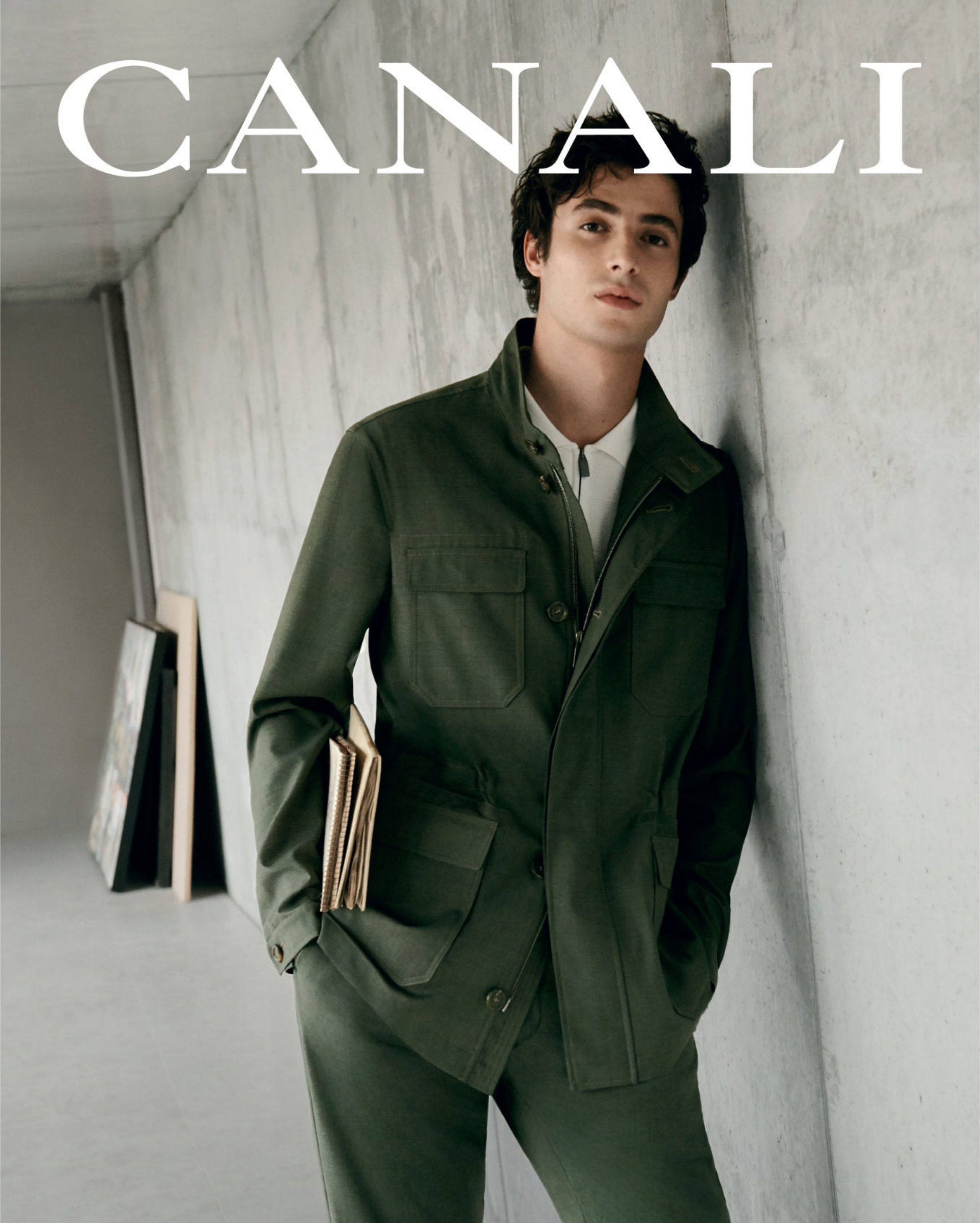
MADE TO MEASURE

CANALI

#GENTLEGESTURES

CANALI.COM

CANALI



loropiana.com

Loro Piana

COLLECTION

Fifty Fathoms

©Photograph: Laurent Ballesta/Gombessa Project

BLANCPAIN OCEAN COMMITMENT

RAISE AWARENESS,
TRANSMIT OUR PASSION,
HELP PROTECT THE OCEAN

www.blancpain-ocean-commitment.com

JB
1735
BLANCPAIN
MANUFACTURE DE HAUTE HORLOGERIE

11 NEW BOND STREET · LONDON W1S 3SR · TEL. 0207 529 0910

Shop at omegawatches.com

SEAMASTER DIVER 300M
CO-AXIAL MASTER CHRONOMETER

LOOKS MAGICAL.
WORKS BEAUTIFULLY.

Although not your typical watch interior, our dreamlike world is not too far removed from the real thing. An OMEGA watch calibre is a tiny universe of components. Each working so wonderfully together, our precision timepieces have earned the trust of athletes, deep-sea adventurers - and even astronauts.

OMEGA

60
55
65
70
75
80
85
90
95
100
KM
MPH
BREITLING
1884
NAVITIMER
SWISS
MADE

Giannis Antetokounmpo

BREITLING

1884

NAVITIMER

FOR THE JOURNEY

DG2285 02 81

DOLCE & GABBANA

DOLCEGABBANA.COM

Summer 2022

Bulletin

049 Why it's time to escape to an off-grid cabin

054 Inside Tatale, London's hot new African restaurant

057 Putting a ring on it: smart tech plays its hand

058 Visual artist Cornelia Parker, interviewed

064 The growing success of gardening duo Urquhart & Hunt

069 Raise a glass to green wine this summer

071 A special case: 50 years of AP's Royal Oak

072 Can the Eletre electric SUV spark Lotus's comeback?

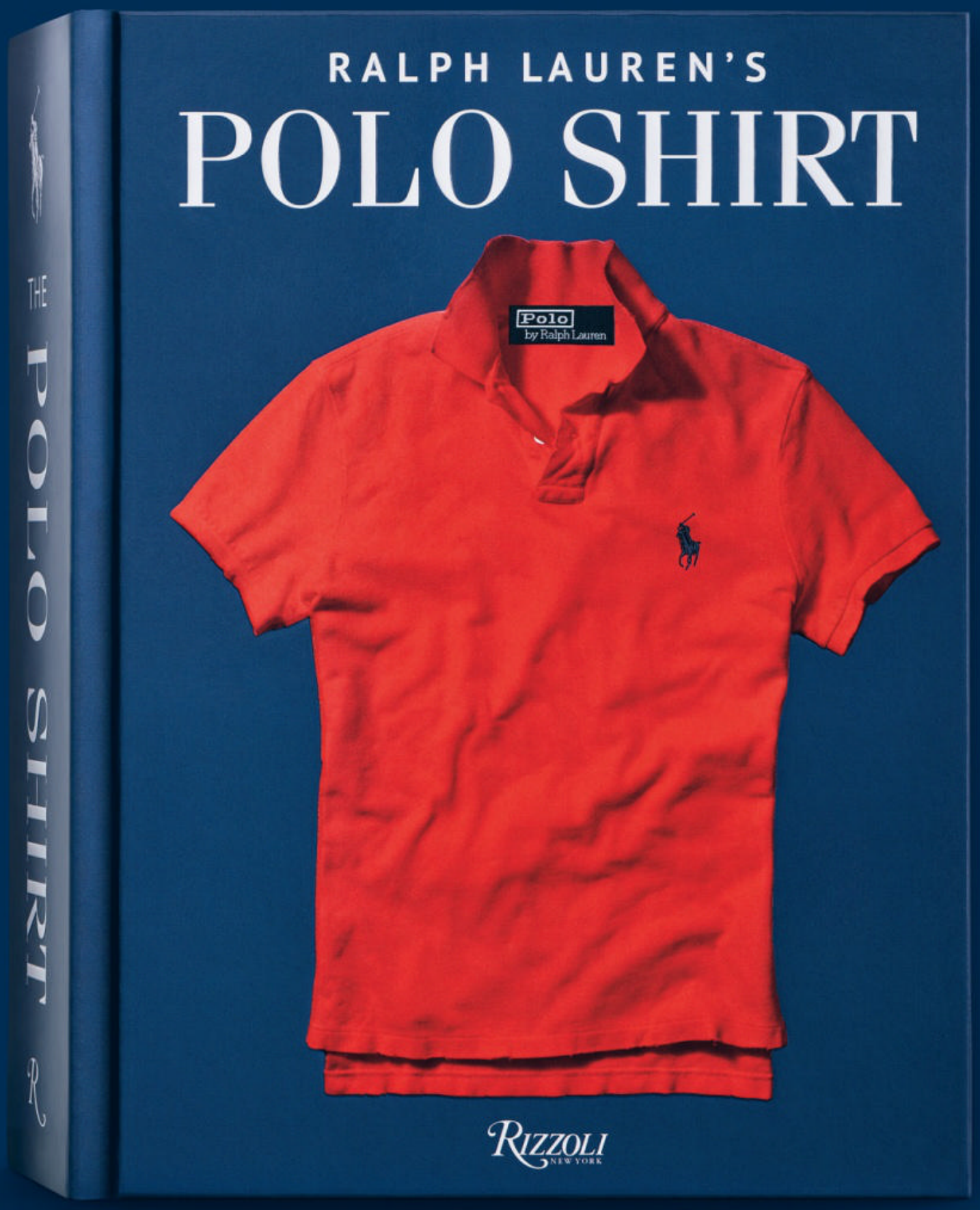
078 Block of ages: why Piet Mondrian is back in fashion

081 How Hermès has sustainability in the bag

085 Good as gold: Acqua di Parma's new scent

Stuart McGlennon

Polo
by Ralph Lauren
ISMEN RESPECT WILDLIFE
Polo
RALPH LAUREN
POLO
RALPH LAUREN



It was never about a shirt,
but a way of living

Ralph Lauren

Summer 2022

Journal

089 Her, and Me, and the Royal We by Andrew O'Hagan

090 Above the Title by Peter Bradshaw

092 Jambon-Beurre by Charlie Teasdale

093 City Folk by Dipo Faloyin

094 Rogering by Alex Bilmes

096 A Bedtime Tory by Murray Clark

The Watch Report

099 The best 22 watches to wear in 2022

Features

128 Elvis in Excelsis by Mick Brown

136 Fits for a King: Summer Menswear 2022

148 All Back to Theirs by Johnny Davis

156 The Unknown Soldier by Tim Lewis

162 Street Style: This Season's Best Footwear

168 England's Dreamer by Olivia Ovenden

168

148

Miya Mizuno/FX | Gus & Stella

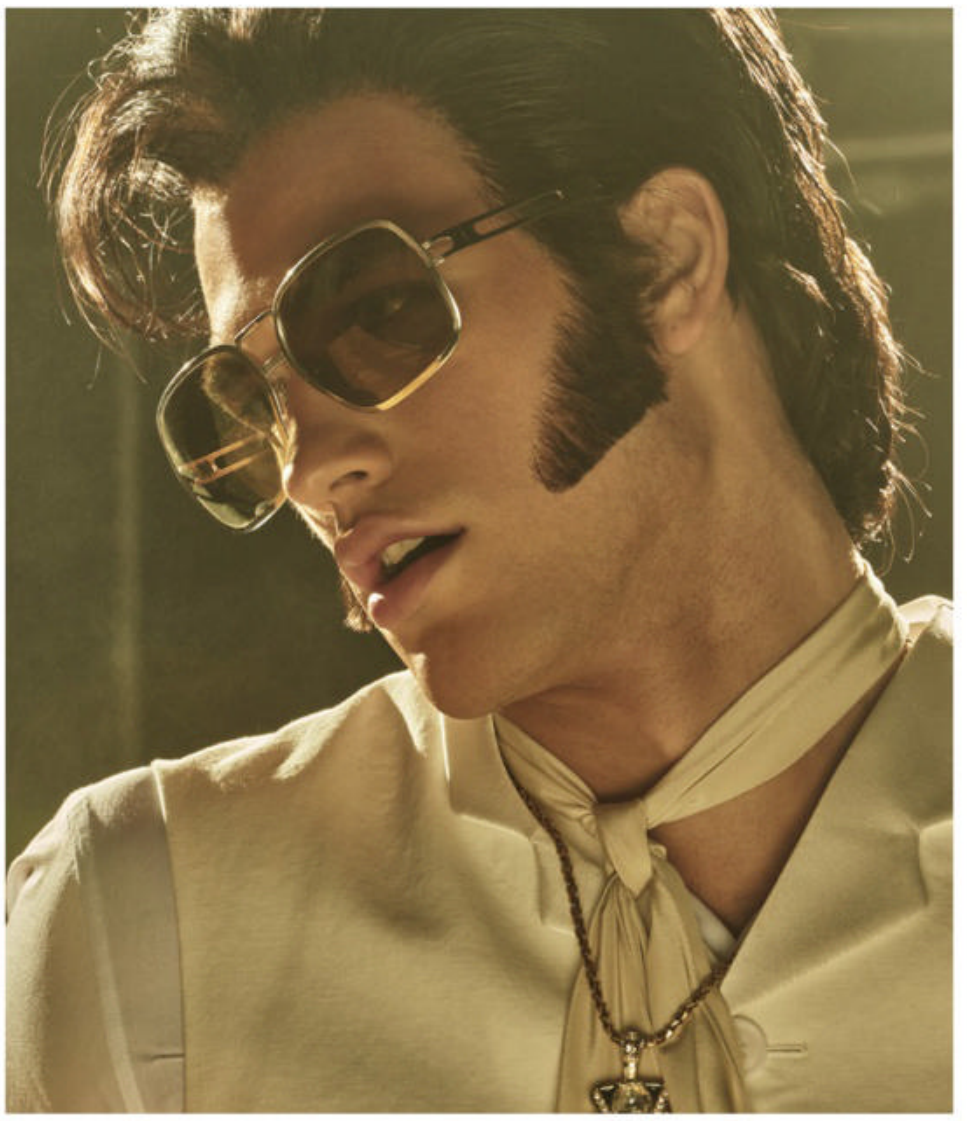
RICHARD MILLE

CALIBER RM 72-01

www.richardmille.com

Summer 2022

Market	174	Cameras, backpacks, lager, sunglasses and sweatshirts
Fiction	184	The Aquifer by Giles Foden
Backstage	194	Long live The King — the story behind our Elvis-inspired fashion shoot



136

On the Cover

Elvis Presley

Pictured around 1957.
Photograph by Getty Images

Esquire subscriptions

Call +44 844 322 1762 and quote reference 1EQ11922

esquire.com/uk
twitter.com/esquireuk
facebook.com/esquiremagazine
@ukesquire

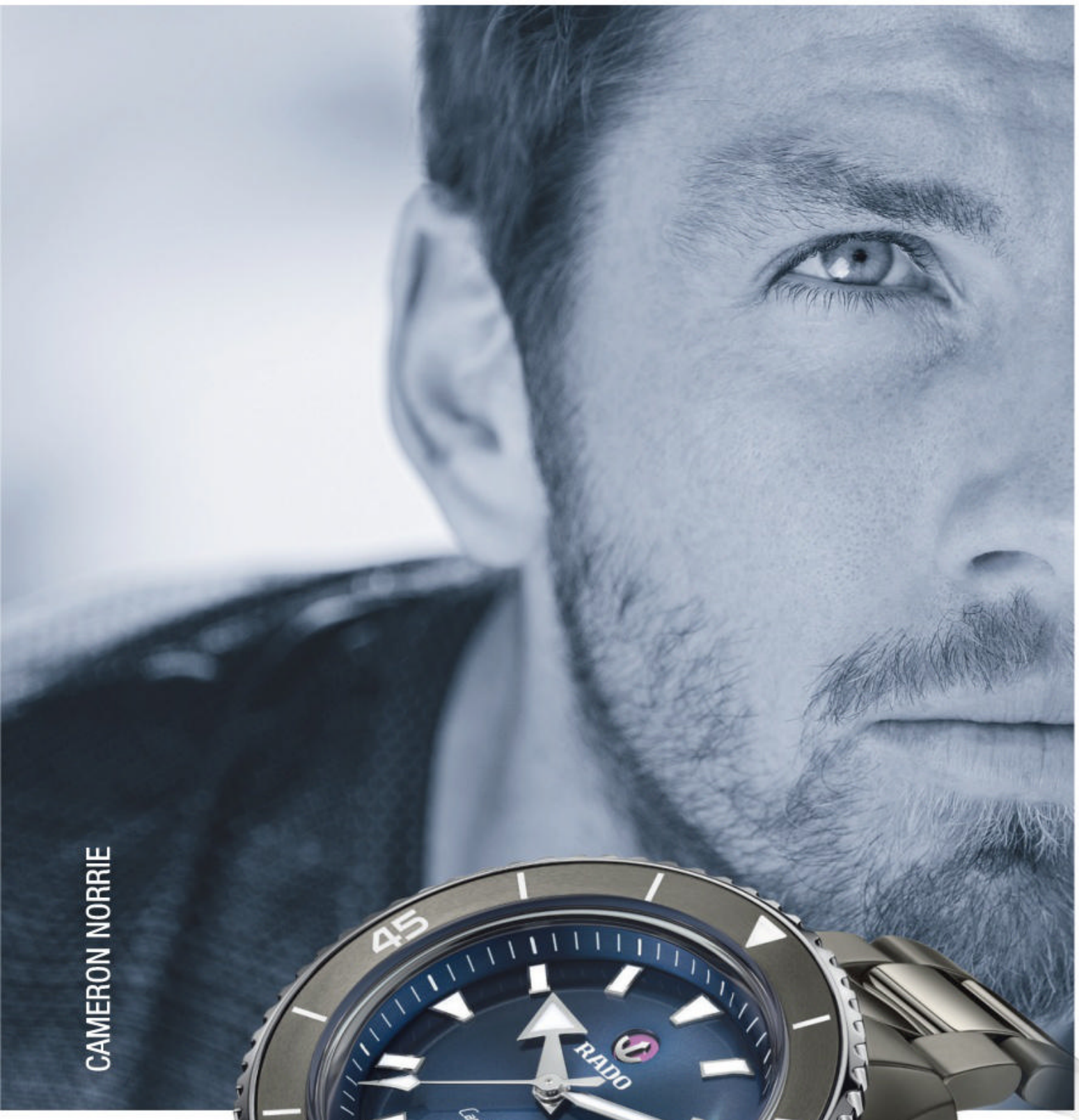
Mariano Vivanco

RADO

SWITZERLAND

RADO.COM

MASTER OF MATERIALS



CAPTAIN COOK HIGH-TECH CERAMIC DIVER

Feel it !

Alex Bilmes
Editor-in-Chief

Deputy Editor
Johnny Davis

Features Director
Miranda Collinge

Style Director
Charlie Teasdale

Executive Digital Editor
Nick Pope

Senior Writer
Olivia Ovenden

Style Editor
Murray Clark

Editors-at-Large
Richard Benson, Sanjiv Bhattacharya (US correspondent), Ed Caesar, Giles Coren, Will Hersey, Tim Lewis, Andrew O'Hagan, Tom Parker Bowles, Will Self

Photographers-at-Large
Tom Craig, Simon Emmett

Workflow Director
Carly Levy

Editorial Business Director
Connie Osborne

Talent

Talent Director
Lottie Lumsden

Talent Editor
Olivia Blair

Editorial Production

Group Chief Sub-Editor/Production Editor
Dom Price

Deputy Chief Sub-Editors
Josh Bolton, Olivia McCrea-Hedley

Sub-Editors
Caitlin Butler, Dina Nagapetyants, Cynthia Peng

Art

Luxury Creative Director
Tom Usher

Art Directors
Lisa Barlow-Wright, Zoya Kaleeva

Art Editor
Leanne Robson

Art Editor
Lauren Jones

Acting Senior Designer
Amy Blacker

Designers
Emily Lord, Sonia Ruprah

Acting Designer
Lisiane Dressler

Pictures

Photography Director
Siân Parry

Picture Editor
Liz Pearn

Deputy Picture Editor
Gemma Roberts

Picture Assistant
Millie Attle

Contributing Editors

Tim Adams / Olie Arnold / Tom Barber / Kevin Braddock / Peter Bradshaw / Mick Brown / Dan Davies / Martin Deeson
Joe Dunthorne / Geoff Dyer / Jo Ellison / Ekow Eshun / Richard Ford / Matthew Fort / Nell Freudenberger
Andrew Harrison / Mark Hix / Michael Holden / John Lanchester / Jeremy Langmead / Ben Machell / Kevin Maher
Dan May / Simon Mills / Ben Mitchell / Philip Norman / Russell Norman / Max Olesker / Alexis Petridis / James Sleaford
Stephen Smith / Will Storr / David Thomson / Paul Wilson

Contributing Photographers

Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott / Gregoire Alexandre / Carin Backoff / Cass Bird / Michael Bodiam / Chris Brooks / Dan Burn-Forti
Pelle Crepin / Ana Cuba / Matthew Donaldson / Phil Dunlop / Chris Floyd / Alexander Guirkinger / Jon Gorrigan
Charlotte Hadden / Frederike Helwig / Nadav Kander / Virginie Khateeb / Luke Kirwan / Jesse Laitinen / Chris Leah
Alexi Lubomirski / Dan McAlister / Angela Moore / Josh Olins / Martin Parr / Ash Reynolds / Kourtney Roy
Christoffer Rudquist / Martin Schoeller / Steve Schofield / Philip Sinden / Peggy Sirota / David Slijper / Juergen Teller
David Vintiner / Ellen von Unwerth / Lukas Wassman / Jooney Woodward / Greg Williams / Paul Zak

Esquire International Editions

China, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Middle East, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, United States

FACE THE FUTURE.

TAG HEUER CONNECTED

CALIBRE E4

THE THRILL OF PROGRESS

Wear OS by Google

Jacqueline Euwe
Chief Luxury Officer

Group Brand Director, Luxury
Sharon Davies-Ridgeway

Executive Assistant to the Chief Luxury Officer
Natasha Mann

Director of Luxury Fashion
Charlotte Hollands

Watches & Jewellery Client Manager
Olivia Horrocks-Burns

Luxury Client Manager
Jessica Day

Luxury Fashion Client Manager
Hannah Howells

Head of Luxury, Agency
Louisa Patey

Head of Client Sales
Ollie Lloyd

Head of Fashion, Beauty & Luxury
Sarah Tsirkas

Director of Health and Wellness
Chris Healy

Director of Travel
Denise Degroot

Head of Agency Sales, UK & Global
Ben Chesters

Regional Group Business Director
Danielle Sewell

Head of Classified
Lee Rimmer

Head of Digital
Ryan Buckley

Executive Creative Director
Mark McCafferty

Senior Connect Director
Bethany Sutton

Senior Partnerships Director
Michelle Pagliarulo

Senior Connect Manager
Connie Ffitch

Head of Live Operations
Madolyn Grove

Live Project Manager, Luxury
Katrina Sen

Director of Commercial Production
Will Ville

Branded Content Lead
Jamie Carson

Art Director, Branded Content
Mairead Gleeson

Head of Media Planning
Lucy Porter

Acting Heads of Media Planning
Ayesha Jina, Wendy Meekings

Media Planning Manager
Rose Sweetman

Production Director
John Hughes

Production Manager
Steve Osborne

Chief Consumer Revenue Officer
Reid Holland

Circulation & Subscriptions Director
James Hill

Digital Marketing & CRM Director
Semma Kumari

Head of Product & Promotions
Aoibheann Foley

Head of Subscriptions
Justine Boucher

Head of PR & Communications
Ben Bolton

PR & Communications Manager
Cristina Wyatt

Interim CEO Hearst UK and President Hearst Europe **Simon Horne**
Chief International Brand Officer **Matt Hayes** Chief Commercial Officer **Jane Wolfson** Chief Commercial Operations Director **Gianluca Ena** Chief People Officer **Surinder Simmons**
Digital Development Director **Matt Hill** Finance Director, Hearst UK **Julien Litzelmann** Business Strategy Director, Hearst UK **Romain Metras**
Director of Operations, Hearst UK **Sophie Wilkinson** Interim Director of PR & Communications **Alison Forth**

Hearst Magazines International

President, Hearst Magazines International **Jonathan Wright**
Senior Vice-President Global Editorial & Brand Director **Kim St Clair Bodden**
Global Editorial & Brand Director **Chloe O'Brien**

Hearst Magazines UK,
House of Hearst, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ
Editorial +44 20 7439 5000 / Advertising +44 20 7297 3480
Visit: esquire.com/uk

Access Hearst Magazines UK website at hearst.co.uk © A publication of Hearst Magazines UK. Issue: Summer 2022 | Published: 12 May 2022. ESQUIRE, ISSN 0960-5150 is published four times per year by Hearst Magazines UK. By permission of Hearst Communication Inc c/o USACAN Media Corp at 123A Distribution Way, Building H-1, Suite 104, Plattsburgh, NY 12901. Periodicals postage paid at Plattsburgh, NY. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Esquire c/o Express Mag, PO box 2769, Plattsburgh, NY 12901-0239. Magazine printed by Walstead Roche, Victoria Business Park, Roche, St Austell, PL26 8LX. Magazine distributed by Frontline Ltd, Peterborough, tel: 01733 555161. Conditions of sale and supply: ESQUIRE shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of trade except at the full retail price of £6 and shall not be lent, hired out, or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorised cover, by way of trade, or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever. Manuscripts and illustrations are accepted on the understanding that no liability is incurred for safe custody, but ESQUIRE cannot consider unsolicited material for publication. All characters in any fictional story are purely imaginary and no reference or allusion is intended to apply to any living person or persons. ESQUIRE is fully protected by copyright and nothing may be printed wholly or in part without permission. ESQUIRE is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation. We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism. If you think we have not met those standards and wish to make a complaint please contact complaints@hearst.co.uk or visit hearst.co.uk/hearst-magazines-uk-complaints-procedure. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO at ipso.co.uk. Subscriptions and back issues: the standard subscription price (BAR) is £24 for four issues of ESQUIRE, based on the standard cover price of £6. For new and renewal orders, ring 01858 438 770* or visit hearstmagazines.co.uk/contact-us. Please note: you can also contact us regarding back issues and special editions | Already a subscriber? Visit hearstmagazines.co.uk/managemyaccount to update your contact details, renew your subscription and find out when your next issue is due to be delivered, or ring 01858 438 770*, or write to ESQUIRE, Hearst Magazines UK, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF. Please quote your subscription number in all correspondence | We regret that free gifts, supplements, books and other items included with the magazine when it is sold in the UK are not available with copies of the magazine purchased outside the UK | *Lines open weekdays, 8am–9.30pm; Saturdays, 8am–4pm. Calls are charged at your standard network rate. Please check with your network provider for more details.

HUBLOT

HUBLOT

hublot.com • f • 🐦 • 📷

ACQUA DI PARMA

NEW COLONIA C.L.U.B.

THE ESSENCE OF ITALIAN LIFE

ACQUADIPARMA.COM

Contributors

MARIANO VIVANCO'S

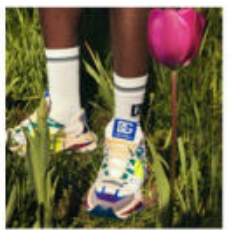
photography has appeared in magazines including *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and the *FT*'s *How To Spend It*.

'FITS FOR A KING', PAGE 136

TIM LEWIS

is a features writer for *The Observer* and an editor-at-large for *Esquire*. He is the author of *Land of Second Chances: The Impossible Rise of Rwanda's Cycling Team*.

'THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER', PAGE 156



MATT HIND'S

photography clients include Margaret Howell, Anderson & Sheppard and Moët & Chandon.

'STREET STYLE', PAGE 162

DAVID NEWTON

has taken photographs for *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Vanity Fair*, as well as for Dior, Nike and Tom Ford Beauty.

'THE WATCH REPORT', PAGE 99

LUKE DAY

is one of the world's leading menswear stylists and a frequent contributor to *The Sunday Times Style*.

'FITS FOR A KING', PAGE 136

DIPO FALOYIN

is a senior editor at *Vice* and the author of a new book, *Africa Is Not A Country*.

'CITY FOLK', PAGE 93

PETER BRADSHAW

has been the chief film critic at *The Guardian* for more than 20 years and is an editor-at-large for *Esquire*.

'ABOVE THE TITLE', PAGE 90

GUS & STELLA

work with photography, film and collage for clients including Chanel, *Elle*, Matchesfashion and Uniqlo.

'ALL BACK TO THEIRS', PAGE 148

GILES FODEN

is the award-winning author of many novels, including *The Last King of Scotland* and, most recently, *Freight Dogs*. He is a professor of Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia.

'THE AQUIFER', PAGE 184

DAN MCALISTER

has been shooting for *Esquire* for 15 years. His clients have included Space NK, *Wallpaper** and Matchesfashion.

'MARKET', PAGE 174

ANDREW O'HAGAN

is an editor-at-large of the *London Review of Books* and the award-winning author, most recently, of *Mayflies*.

'HER, AND ME, AND THE ROYAL WE', PAGE 89

MICK BROWN

is a features writer for the *Daily Telegraph* and the author of, among other books, *Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: the Rise and Fall of Phil Spector*.

'ELVIS IN EXCELSIS', PAGE 128

WILL HERSEY

is a writer and editor, and *Esquire's* motoring correspondent.

'EASTERN PROMISES', PAGE 72

RACHEL LOUISE BROWN

is a former photo director of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Town & Country*. Her photography has been exhibited internationally.

'ENGLAND'S DREAMER', PAGE 168

50
10
20
30
TUDOR
GENEVE
CHRONOMETER
OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED

TUDOR

#BORN TODARE

What is it that drives someone to greatness? To take on the unknown, venture into the unseen and dare all? This is the spirit that gave birth to TUDOR. This is the spirit embodied by every TUDOR Watch. Some are born to follow. Others are born to dare.

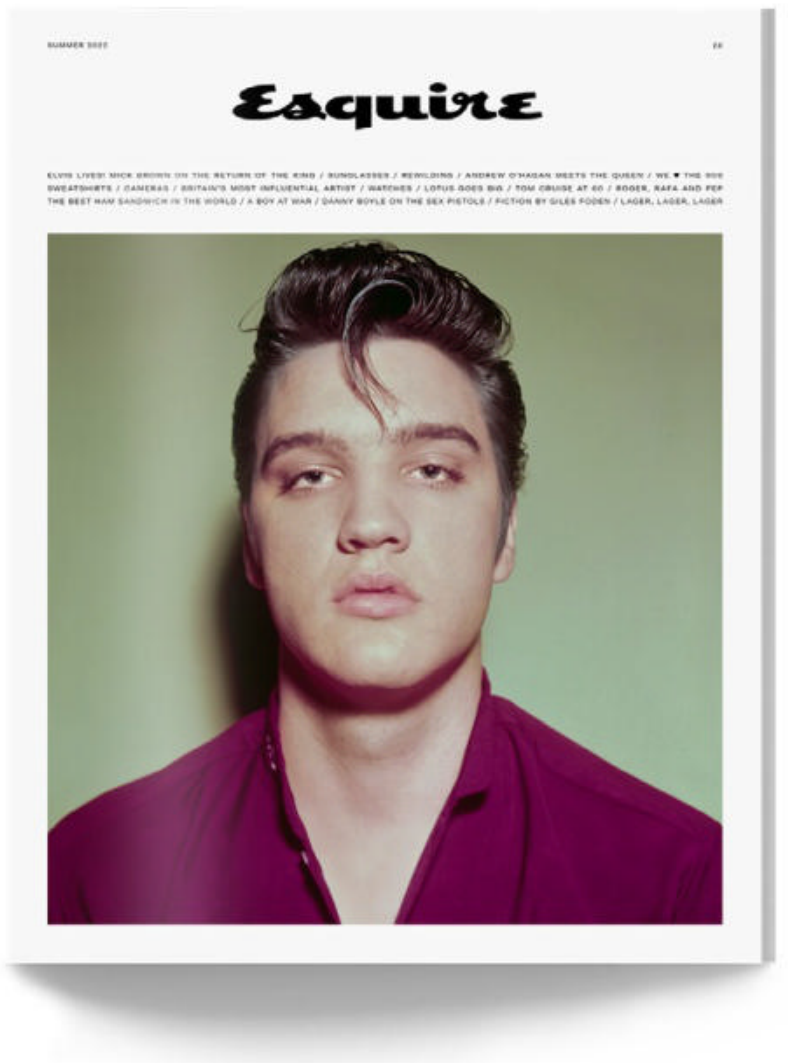
39 millimetre case
in 316L stainless steel

Snowflake hands
A hallmark of TUDOR divers' watches since 1969

Manufacture calibre
MT5402 with 70-hour "weekend-proof" power-reserve, silicon hair-spring and COSC-certification

Five-year transferable guarantee with no registration or periodic maintenance checks required

BLACK BAY FIFTY-EIGHT



Elvis Presley, the subject of a new Hollywood biopic, is Esquire's Summer 2022 cover star

The King and the Queen

"Ginger awoke around 1.30pm, rolled over, went back to sleep for a few minutes, then called her mother. 'How was Elvis?' her mother asked, and Ginger said she didn't know, he had never come back to bed, maybe she had better go check on him. She washed and put on her make-up in her own bathroom, then knocked on Elvis's bathroom door. When there was no answer, she pushed on it and discovered him lying on the floor, his gold pyjama bottoms down around his ankles, his face buried in a pool of vomit on the thick shag carpet. In a daze, she called downstairs and asked to speak to someone on duty, and the maid put Al Strada on the line. She thought there was something wrong, she told him. He had better come quick."

And that was the end of Elvis Presley, according to page 647 of my Abacus paperback edition of *Careless Love*, volume two of Peter Guralnick's peerless biography.

Alex Bilmes
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Except it wasn't — the end, that is. There is a strong argument to say that the end had come years earlier. That the jumpsuited, sweat-soaked Elvis who stumbled through the 1970s was manifestly not the same person as the cowlicked country boy who shook up the world in the 1950s. And there is an equally strong counter-argument to say that, closing in on 70 years after his first pelvic provocation, we still have not reached the end, and perhaps we never will. Elvis survives, Elvis abides — as myth, as meme, or, in our case, as magazine cover star.

So: summer 1977, the King is dead. Summer 2022, long live the King. In June, Elvis will be the subject of a new movie from Baz Luhrmann, director of juke-box extravaganzas as kitsch as the Vegas Strip: *Strictly Ballroom*, *Moulin Rouge!*. It remains to be seen what Luhrmann will make of Elvis's lurid later years, but Tom Hanks, somewhat against type, is playing Colonel Parker, the singer's malevolent manager, so that, at least, ought to be worth investigating.

It's the eternal half-life of Elvis that Mick Brown is concerned with in his excellent tribute for this issue. That, and the magnificence of the performer, the magnitude of his achievement. Because, for all the bathos of his later years, Elvis in full cry is untouchable. If you've never seen it, or even if you have, do yourself a favour and YouTube the *'68 Comeback Special*, as I did after reading Mick's piece, for evidence of Elvis's extraordinary gifts.

More Elvis: for our fashion story in this issue, stylist Luke Day and photographer Mariano Vivanco, both making their *Esquire* debuts, provide their own spectacular paean to the boy from Tupelo, Mississippi, with a shoot that both recreates and updates Elvis's utterly distinctive look, cleverly and wittily using clothes from the current menswear collections. It's instructive, at least to me, that Luke and Mariano were inspired by leathery later Elvis, rather than the impeccable golden boy of our cover. There are many Elvises, as we know, and each one means something different to each of us.

It seems only right to point out here that while his impact on pop culture, and on men's style, might be inarguable, Elvis's position in the American narrative, as a white boy singing black music in the Jim Crow South, is not and has never been uncontested. "A hero to most," as →

PIAGET

NEW PIAGET POLO 36mm

E-boutique on Piaget.com

VICENZA

FOPE

DAL 1929

fope.com

ELVIS *in* EXCELSIS
AS HOLLYWOOD READIES A MAJOR NEW BIOPIC, *MICK BROWN* CONSIDERS THE LIFE AND DEATH, AND AFTERLIFE, OF THE MOST ENDURING POP IMMORTAL OF THEM ALL

Chuck D had it, "but he never meant shit to me." Reverence has its place in pop, perhaps, but you can have far too much of it.

Two months after Elvis died, 4,000 miles away in London, a group of rock'n'rollers who weren't born when the King first started recording, released their first and, as it turned out, last studio album. At a stroke, they made performers of previous generations look geriatric. Mick Jagger was 34; he may as well have been 78. Now, from the studio that brought us *Bambi*, the Sex Pistols are themselves the subjects of a biopic: *Pistol*, Danny Boyle's forthcoming six-part show for Disney+, based on the memoirs of guitarist Steve Jones. (Coincidentally, or not, the creator of *Pistol* is Craig Pearce, long-time writing partner of Baz Luhrmann, and co-writer of *Elvis*.)

Surely to no one's surprise, *Pistol* has generated controversy even before its release, chiefly because of Jones's former bandmate John Lydon's attempts to prick its balloon with a giant safety pin. The Sex Pistols' story, as we know, did not end well. "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?" spat Lydon, Johnny Rotten as was, from the stage of the Winterland in San Francisco, in January 1978, before quitting the band — not, as it turned out, for the last time. Since then, Lydon has not been slow to voice his disapproval of the various Sex Pistols memorials that have appeared over the years. He was most exercised by Alex Cox's 1986 film, *Sid and Nancy*: "a degrading, stupid, lying piece of cheesiness". (One can only hope that one day he'll get round to telling us what he really thinks of it.) But his lawyers' attempts to prevent its release failed.

Last August, Lydon's lawyers failed again, this time in a bid to prevent the makers of *Pistol* using the band's music in their series. Lydon predicted that the project would prove "destructive" for the band's legacy. You can see why he might be concerned. The classic rock biopic is the most dutiful of genres, every story beat preprogrammed, with messy, contradictory lives forced to conform to the arc of the hero's journey, the narrative structure most beloved of the bogus screenwriting gurus. Biopics can draw the sting from even the most dangerous of performers, while encouraging actors to indulge in fearful *Stars in Their Eyes*-style mimicry. If musicians as explosive as James Brown and Johnny Cash can be tamed and explained — and the movies have proved that they can — then it's hard to blame Lydon for worrying that even the Pistols could be made to seem insipid, even boring, by the Hollywood treatment.

The chances of this happening are considerably lessened by the involvement of Danny Boyle. Boyle doesn't do boring. In this issue, in conversation with *Esquire*'s Olivia Ovenden, the director of *Trainspotting*, *28 Days Later* and *Slumdog Millionaire* — but not of the most recent James Bond film — has his say, about punk and plenty more besides. Including the most recent James Bond film.

The Boyle production that might have been seen by more people than of any of them was the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Summer Olympics, which he directed a decade ago this July. That show, you will remember, included a cast of thousands, most famously Daniel Craig, as 007, and the biggest British star of them all, Her Majesty, as… Her Majesty.

In June, all being well, the Queen celebrates her Platinum Jubilee: an unprecedented 70 years on the throne. Pop historians will recall that her →

ALL BACK TO THEIRS
WITH THE 1990S REVIVAL IN FULL SWING, JOHNNY DAVIS – HE WAS THERE! – REMEMBERS THE PARTY DECADE THAT FASHION AND POP CULTURE CANNOT FORGET
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUS & STELLA
ck
TETRIS

Silver Jubilee, in the summer of 1977, was soundtracked by the Sex Pistols, with their not entirely worshipful anthem, "God Save the Queen". We hope this summer's won't be her last knees-up, of course, but at 96, she's nearer the end of her reign than the beginning. This issue, in our Journal section, *Esquire* editor-at-large Andrew O'Hagan pays his own, personal tribute to the monarch. Unlike Lydon, O'Hagan neglects to rhyme the word "Queen" with "fascist regime". What he does say is a good deal more thoughtful — and funnier. I haven't tried pogoing to it, yet. But I might.

ON THE SUBJECT OF ENDINGS, I'VE JUST FINISHED *The Last Days of Roger Federer*, the new book from the freewheeling Geoff Dyer, occasionally of these pages. Rather than an account of the death of a tennis player, as its title might suggest, *TLDORF* is a meditation on the final works of great artists and thinkers and, yes, a certain Rolex pitchman. Not their late works — a much-ploughed plot — but their last works. It is a book about stopping and going on. About knowing when to quit and knowing when not to quit. About getting old, and going mad, and dying. It is a pandemic book that is occasionally elegiac, but never gloomy, and it teems with people and ideas and movements. Some of these will be familiar from previous Dyer outings (DH Lawrence, jazz, Burning Man), others less so. This time, he embraces the world-famous (Beethoven; Nietzsche; JMW Turner) as well as more niche enthusiasms (Eve Babitz; the mind-blowing Shirley Hazzard; the author's fellow *Esquire* contributor, the movie lexicographer David Thomson.)

As I mentioned, I enjoyed *The Last Days of Roger Federer* so much I didn't want it to end. Or did I? As with every book I've ever read, I kept an eye on the progress of my bookmark through the pages. Once or twice, or three times, I flipped to the back to remind myself of the total number of pages I had to get through (268), calculating the distance I'd come and how far I still had to go. Why do I do this, even with books I love? Is it not true when I say that I don't want them to end? Do I secretly want them to be over, ASAP? And are books the only things I want to end as quickly as possible? Do I not find myself wishing that even exciting, dramatic films would be over sooner? Is it not the case that even during the most gripping live performance — a transfixing play, a nail-biting game of football — I will, at least once, probably twice, look at my watch to get a sense of what time the show will finish, and how soon I might make it home?

Is this true of more important things? One's career? One's marriage? Life itself? Could it be, as Dyer has it, that our deepest desire is for it all to be over?

And, if so, would this, in part, explain our ongoing fascination with Elvis? Is it the dream of the glory years we are most attracted to, or the degradation of the final moments, the pathetic lurch to the finish line? Elvis was 42 when he died. Too young, we all agree. And yet, had he gone aged 27, like Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse and the rest of the "stupid club" (including that tiresome phoney Jim Morrison who, as Dyer points out, sang "The End" at the beginning, the wazzock), might Elvis's star not have continued to shine even brighter? On reflection, I think not. In the Presley case, the dramatic decline seems key to the enduring appeal. Weird, no?

A LAST WORD. THIS WILL BE THE FINAL ISSUE OF *Esquire* in which Johnny Davis is listed as deputy editor. Johnny was the first person I hired after I started at the magazine, in 2011, and his contribution to *Esquire* over the past decade has been incalculable, on the page and behind the scenes. In this issue alone, Johnny has edited a special section on watches, conducted an interview with a pair of pioneering garden designers and written a piece about how the luxury industry has fallen for fungus. He has also delivered a terrific feature about the current vogue for all things 1990s, a decade in which he played his own modest part as an editor of *The Face*. (Alas, not a single mention in his piece of *Stars in Their Eyes*. Clearly, Johnny missed the Elvis special, hosted by Russ Abbot, in January 1993. Amateur!)

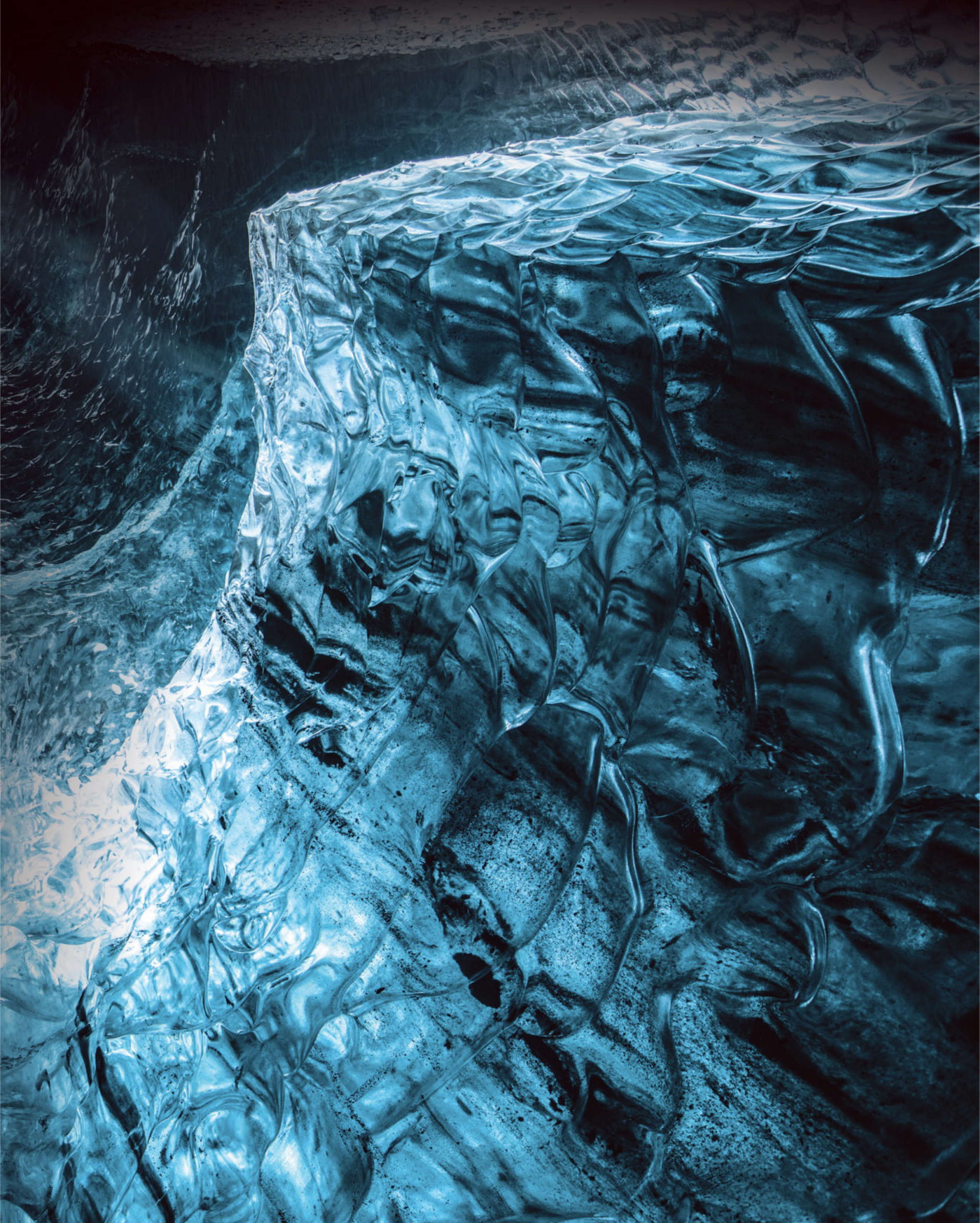
By the time this issue reaches shelves, Johnny will have left the building, as they used to say about Elvis. He is a formidable journalist and a magazine person to his bones, and I will miss him very much. But he stays on as an *Esquire* editor-at-large, and he will be writing for the magazine and for *esquire.com*. So, thank you, Johnny, for now. But this is not an ending. ○

VERSACE
EROS
EAU DE PARFUM

VERSACE

EROS

THE NEW EAU DE PARFUM



BALL

OFFICIAL RR STANDARD

Since 1891

Accuracy under adverse conditions

CHRONOMETER
CERTIFIED COSC

REVOLUTIONARY
MICRO GAS LIGHTS

ANTI-MAGNETIC TO
1,000 GAUSS

WATER RESISTANT TO
100M/330FT

Ø 40MM
CASE SIZE

904L
STAINLESS STEEL

DESIGNED FOR CHALLENGE. BUILT FOR PURPOSE.

From day to night, when adventure turns into adversity, charge forward with darkness-defying luminosity and exacting precision. Sporty and elegant, the Engineer III Marvelight Chronometer carries traditions of performance into any condition. A tool for exploration. An ally for the unknown.

ballwatch.ch
BALL Watch UK Ltd. Tel. 0800 098 89 98
uk@ballwatch.ch

ALPINE

OUR ALPINE CENTRES

CAMBRIDGE
CARDIFF
CHELMSFORD
GLASGOW
LONDON
LONDON SOUTH EAST
MANCHESTER
SOLIHULL
ST ALBANS
WINCHESTER
WIRRAL

COMING SOON:
ABERDEEN
JERSEY

FIND OUT MORE
ON ALPINECARS.COM

THUNDER GREY
BROWN LEATHER
INTERIOR HARMONY

SABELT®
6 WAYS COMFORT
BUCKET SEATS

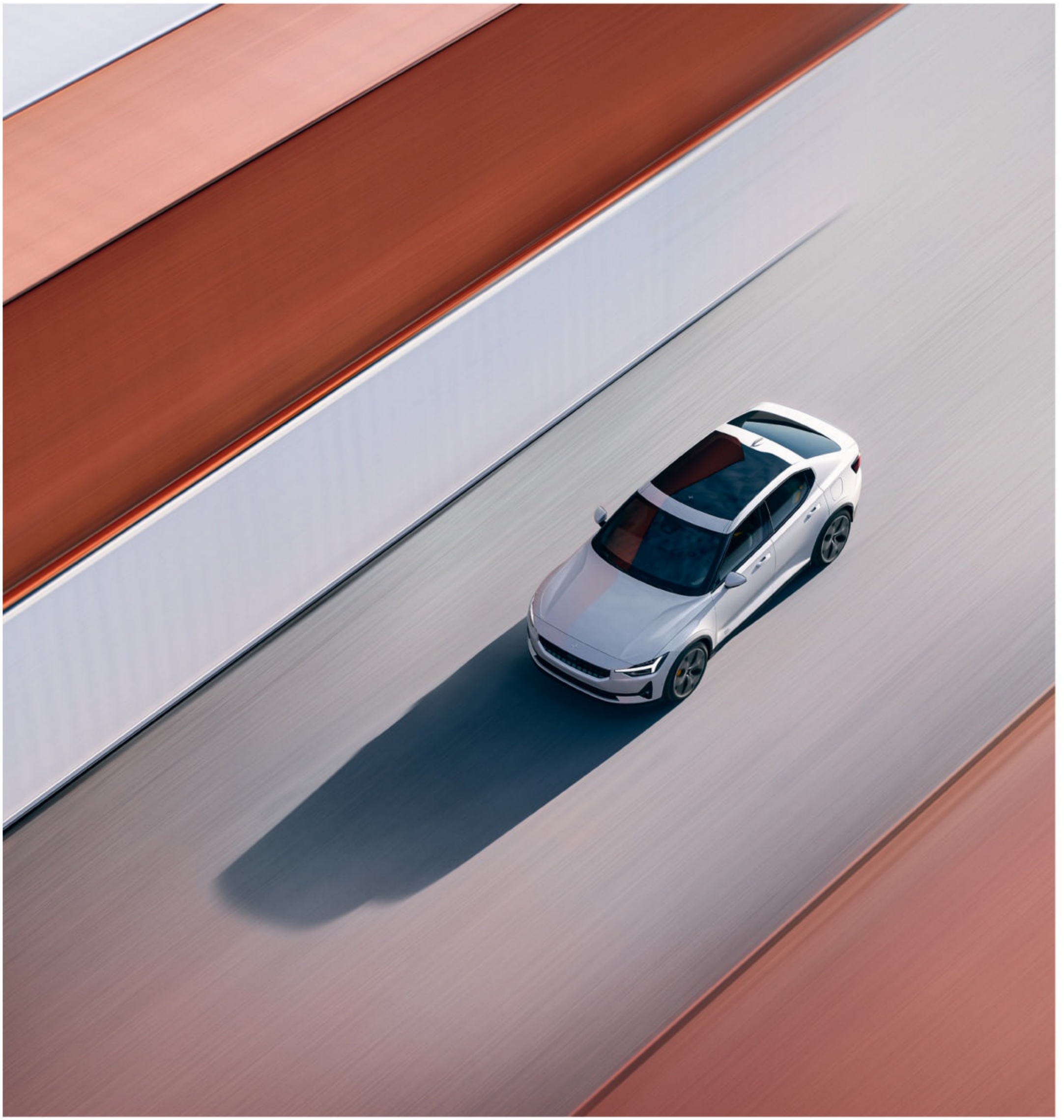
UNLADEN
WEIGHT
> 1,119 KG

A110 GT

GRAND TOURING BY ALPINE

Official fuel consumption in mpg and CO_2 emissions (g/km) for the new Alpine A110 GT petrol, 221 kW are: Total consumption combined (mpg): 41.54 - 40.35 WLTP; CO_2 emissions combined (g/km): 153-160 WLTP. Emissions standard: Euro 6d-iSC-FCM. Official fuel consumption on mpg and CO_2 emissions (g/km) for the Alpine A110 range are (mpg): 45.56 - 40.35 WLTP ; CO_2 emissions combined (g/km): 152 - 160 WLTP. Emissions standard: Euro 6d-iSC-FCM. The CO_2 figures are based on the WLTP test cycle which will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration. For more information, please see alpinecars.com/en/wltp/.

Polestar 2



BULLETIN

PEOPLE TO WATCH, PLACES TO BE, PRODUCTS TO BUY

Cabin fever

In 2022, the call of the wild comes with all (or most) mod cons

By Charlie Teasdale

Pasco Photography

Somewhere in the wilds of Cumbria there is a bus, and on top of that bus there sits another, slightly smaller bus. This unholy splicing — the gentle hump of a VW campervan fused onto the hulking cuboid of an American community coach — is characteristic of the off-grid "Skoolie" movement in the US, which sees people swapping bricks and mortar for life on the road in a converted municipal vehicle. But that must be where the similarity ends, because there can't be many Skoolies with an Aga.

You can rent this mega-bus via Hinterlandes, a company established in the Lake District by Hannah and John Graham. They have a portfolio of remote abodes dotted across the Lakes — including a hut, a cabin and a Jetstream caravan — all of which are in semi-secret locations that change on a regular basis. You only find out exactly where they are when you book.

The Hinterlandes portfolio is indicative of a new wave of exceptionally well-appointed off-grid lodgings that are available in the UK. The company's "Hidden Hut", currently located somewhere near Crummock Water, has a marble-clad shower, Egyptian-cotton linens and a pizza oven. The phrase "off-grid cabin" might conjure images of a damp, flea-bitten shack in the Adirondacks, but that's way off the mark.

"Really, it's just like a hotel room," says John Graham. "It's everything you need and nothing else. No TV or anything like that, but the things that are there are a bit more curated and there for a purpose. Things can become quite luxurious when you're at the top of a mountain… but not *luxurious* luxurious.

"The difference with our accommodation is that you are off-grid and you're completely in the middle of nowhere," he continues. "I think people have latched on to that a bit — getting away from civilisation or the daily grind, especially with the last year."

Around 70 per cent of Hinterlandes clients are from London and below. Southerners, it would seem, are the keenest to reset, which is why entrepreneurs Ben Elliott and Hector Hughes launched Unplugged in 2021. The company targets those looking to escape "endless Zoom calls" and the like, and insists that guests who stay at one of its 11 secluded cabins (all within an hour's drive of London) must lock their phones and devices away when they check in.

"We're not just a cabin company," Elliott tells me. "We really see ourselves as an offline experience that happens to be in a cool cabin in the countryside." Unplugged cabins are designed for people who don't just want to get out of the city, but actively want to detach from the world for a few days. One of the company's first guests said it was "like camping, but not shit", and that seems to be the thrust of →

Previous page: Unplugged's 'Loki' cabin, situated two hours south-west of London. Below: one of the huts at Glen Dye near Aberdeen

GOOD DAY SUNSHINE

CHAMPAGNE

Veuve Clicquot

Veuve Clicquot

OVER 18S ONLY. PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

bedrinkaware.co.uk

this new movement. Mindful, but not ascetic.

In operation for just a year, Unplugged has already noted three key subsets of guest. The bulk of bookings are made by couples who need some dedicated time together. "Perhaps one person is annoyed that the other is always on their phone," suggests Elliott. Then there are the families with young kids, looking to escape for some quality time. And, perhaps most intriguingly, there are the solo business-people who need space to think. "They'll just come for three nights and really switch off, but also to think and focus on [the problem] they want to solve."

There is, of course, another group of cabin hunters: those who wish to remain in algorithmic touch with society. In eastern Scotland, on the 15,000-acre Glen Dye estate, entrepreneur Charlie Gladstone has installed rustic lodgings to complement, not replace, the bricks-and-mortar lets on the estate. The North Lodge, which sleeps six, offers all the comforts of a very well-appointed home — vinyl collection, Japanese kitchen knives, unlimited firewood, a library of books — but if guests feel the call of the wild, they can venture through the trees to the river cabin, which has a wood-fired hot tub and Big Green Egg barbecue. "Notions of the good life," he says, explaining the ethos at Glen Dye, "and by the good life, I mean beautifully made food, art, provenance, quality, nature — all things that are simple and less complicated than an international jet-set life."

Gladstone likens the concept to a business-class cabin. High-flying passengers may claim they need a big desk to work but, in reality, they only look at their laptop for an hour or so before settling back and watching a film. At Glen Dye, guests can walk in the woods, swim in the rivers, or even try their hand at bushcraft — "but I don't think, in reality, people want to be truly off-grid," he says. "We find people want WiFi." ○ *hinterlandes.com; unplugged.rest; glendyecabinsandcottages.com*

Above: the hybrid van designed by Hinterlandes. Below: The Cabin, also by Hinterlandes

Stuart McGlennon

Veuve Clicquot

OVER 18S ONLY. PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

bedrinkaware.co.uk

Akwasi Brenya-Mensa, right, will open his restaurant Tatale in June

His own story

In south London, a chef brings the personal touch to pan-African cuisine

By Miranda Collinge

When Akwasi Brenya-Mensa was a child, growing up in Mitcham, south London, he became unofficially anointed as his "mum's assistant" at mealtimes. The eldest of four boys, Akwasi was the one who found himself in the kitchen with his mother, peeling sprouts at Christmas or mashing things in the *asanka*, a ridged clay pot ubiquitous in Ghana — from where both his parents emigrated to England in the 1970s — which is used to pound food smooth.

"To me, it was like this massive science experiment. It was like alchemy," says the 40-year-old chef, who trained under *The Great British Menu*'s champion of champions James Cochran at Restaurant 12:51 in north London, and whose own restaurant, Tatale, is due to open in south London in the late spring. "It was like, how have we gone from peanuts, tomatoes, ginger, garlic, water and some salted fish, to then having a groundnut soup at the end, which is really delicious? I was very curious about the whole thing, asking questions. Maybe annoying my mother, who knows!"

Brenya-Mensa intends Tatale, which will occupy the ground floor of the Africa Centre in Southwark — the new location for the tremendously influential cultural space that was founded in Covent Garden in the 1960s — to be "relaxed, but also a bit educational" and serve as "a gateway to African food or African cooking" for those to whom it is less familiar.

Take, for example, the restaurant's name. This he borrowed from a Ghanaian plantain pancake dish. "I wanted something that is universal of the black experience," he says. "Plantain is central, whether it's African food, Caribbean food, Brazilian food or even in Latin America: any area where there are large black populations."

I met Brenya-Mensa — briefly — at a test dinner for Tatale on a cold evening in late January; Covid-related staff shortages and an eleventh-hour venue change meant that he and his kitchen were somewhat up against it. "It was a hurricane backstage," he tells me on the phone, some recovery days later (he and his team finished at 4.30am). Still, the delicious food — which included chichinga chicken with palm-wine pickled cucumber, and a whipped cheesecake with chin chin crumb — didn't let on. When it came to serving the omo tuo and nkate nkwan (mashed rice balls in groundnut soup, which, at Brenya-Mensa's supper-club events, has acquired a "cult-like status"), there was a shortage of bowls: it came out instead in giant serving dishes. One spoonful in and no one seemed to notice.

Having begun his cooking education in his mother's kitchen, Brenya-Mensa continued it in

Almass Badat

Dishes at the restaurant include mushrooms with jollof couscous, left, cassavas bravas, below left, and mango and cucumber grain salad, below right

Sheffield, where, while studying for a degree in criminology and social policy, he noticed the "burger wave" that had already taken hold in London had yet to arrive. He opened a burger pop-up, which, as a budding criminologist, he took on with a forensic intensity. "That's always been my approach: to break things down," he says. "With burgers it was, what makes the perfect patty? What makes the perfect sauce? I made hundreds of versions, tweaking this and that."

Later, working as a DJ and in music management, he travelled widely, often hosting supper clubs when back in the UK, where he would experiment with the cuisines he'd experienced abroad. His mum might be sympathetic to the food purveyors of Tel Aviv, where, in 2018, he "ate the most amount of hummus and probably annoyed the most amount of hummus-makers by asking them many, many, many questions".

The Tel Aviv research morphed into another favourite dish at the supper clubs: black-eyed bean hummus with red palm oil and dukkah, a Middle Eastern spice blend. "I like to immerse myself in a culture or a place," he says, "try to understand it from the inside, and then replicate it on a plate."

It was during a family trip to Ghana in 2019, however, when the plans for Tatale started to click. "That's when the cogs started turning," he says. "I realised that I could take the process of going to a place, tasting and trying everything, speaking to chefs and speaking to people, and apply it to my own heritage."

That experience, coupled with a growing sense that the UK food scene was becoming more open and curious about African cuisine — Brenya-Mensa cites the success of restaurants including Chishuru in Brixton, Chuku's in Tottenham and Stork in Mayfair — meant that the timing now feels right. "It's only recently that there's been that interest," he says. "So I don't know if it could have happened much earlier than it did."

Recently, Brenya-Mensa stood in the kitchen with his mum again. He had asked her and his aunt to take him through their recipe for "red red", a black-eyed pea stew. As they cooked, he tried, gently, to suggest ideas he'd come across from his own cooking, such as using less oil. "They weren't interested," he says, laughing. "But that's what the concept for Tatale has been born out of: learning how things were done before me. It's a different story than the one my mum or aunt would tell. It's my story. I'm OK with that." ○

Tatale, 64 Suffolk Street, London SE1, will open on 7 June; tataleandco.com

Anti-magnetic.
5-day power reserve.
10-year warranty.

The new ProPilot X
is powered by
Oris Calibre 400.

#GoYourOwnWay

Play & Win

ORIS BOUTIQUE LONDON
41 South Molton Street
London
W1K 5RP

ORIS
HÖLSTEIN 1904

Get ready for fin(ger) tech

One smart ring to rule them all?

By Nick Pope

In the summer of 2020, as dormant sports leagues plotted their comebacks amid rising Covid rates, the NBA turned to an unlikely place for help: a Finnish jeweller, albeit one with a twist. Pioneering smart-ring start-up Ōura offered teams the ability to analyse their athletes' heart rates, respiratory health and body temperature through a titanium band and dedicated app, potentially identifying early signs of the virus (at which point, players would get turfed out of the league-wide bubble). The lightweight rings are far less obtrusive than smart watches, which convinced the NBA to purchase 2,000 of the sleek, sensor-packed devices. Following the restart, the season ended without a single Covid case.

What began life in 2015 as a simple sleep-tracking tool had now earned a reputation as a public-health must-have. Sales doubled year on year, and the company — which released its third-generation model late last year — is now valued at a reported $800 million. But this period of unchecked dominance could soon come to an end. At CES (Consumer Electronics Show) 2022 in January, two upcoming biometric rings were on display: American brand Movano will monitor chronic diseases, while French start-up Circular wants to dive deeper into sleep data. The spectre of Apple looms largest, with some experts predicting that the smart-ring patent it filed in 2015 will also become a reality this year.

The question is: can any of them gain credibility in the fashion world? That's certainly the ambition across the board, but the Apple Watch's failure to transcend its utilitarian status suggests there may be one too many holes in that business plan. Whether it be through collaborations or celebrity tie-ins, any tech brand that hopes to join the men's jewellery boom will have to play it smarter than the rest. ○

From $299, ouraring.com; Movano and Circular are set to release their devices later this year

Ringing the changes: Ōura's Ring Gen3 models can measure blood oxygen, track physical and mental recovery and are water-resistant up to 100m

An exploded view

With a major new show at Tate Britain, Cornelia Parker looks back on an incendiary career

By Miranda Collinge

'The work I make is almost like a sympathetic magic': the artist Cornelia Parker, above. Opposite: 'Cold Dark Matter' (1991), Parker's famous 'exploding shed', will be on display at Tate Britain for the first time

In 1991, Cornelia Parker decided to blow up a garden shed. The shed didn't belong to anyone in particular; in fact, it was a composite, built from various bits of other sheds, and filled with the tools and toys and general life-detritus that Parker had collected from friends and neighbours and car-boot sales. Parker asked the Army School of Ammunition if they would explode the shed for her, and to her surprise they said yes. After they'd done it, Parker gathered up the charred and shattered fragments and suspended them on wires around a single bare lightbulb. She called the piece "Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View". Later, the owners of an old pram that her neighbours had donated came back for it, but it was too late. "It was part of an artwork!" she chuckles.

"There were bombs going off in London because of the IRA, so I blew something up myself," says the 65-year-old artist, who is tall and friendly and wears her hair in an ultra-short bob that has become something of a trademark. We are sitting at the kitchen table in her home in north London, which doubles as her studio (she is married, and has a 20-year-old daughter). Parker saw the blast as a way of embodying the fear: "You know, when you explode something, things can't be damaged any more." Conversely, by suspending the remnants, Parker sought to undo the violence she had initiated: "That's me trying to put it back together again."

"Cold Dark Matter" will be one of around 100 works from Parker's diverse and inventive artistic career, for which she was nominated for the 1997 Turner Prize and awarded an OBE in 2010, that will be in her solo exhibition at Tate Britain in London this summer. Surprisingly, given her pre-eminence in the field — her scaled-down replica of the gothic Bates home from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* caused something of a sensation when it was installed on the top-floor terrace of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2016, and again two years later, in the courtyard of the Royal Academy in London — it is her first major show in the capital since 1998.

It will be a chance, she says, to "get the old favourites out", such as the shed and "30 Pieces of Silver", a collection of silver objects — teapots, plates, candlesticks — which, in 1988, Parker flattened with a steamroller and then suspended just above the ground, so that they appear almost to levitate: a dinner service for the damned. (Not the *Psycho* house, however, which, to Parker's mild frustration, the show's budget can't cover. "I wanted to put it on the roof of the Tate," she says with a shrug.) →

© Anne-Katrin Purkiss. Tate © Cornelia Parker. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage 2022

125

YEARS SWISS ARMY KNIFE™

VICTORINOX

REPLICA 1897

125 YEARS OF PREPAREDNESS.

125 years ago, Karl Elsener didn't just invent the Swiss Army Knife™ – he invented an attitude. To this day, it still encourages people all over the world to pursue their passions. Join us in honouring his legacy by tackling every challenge with confidence.

Part of your journey.

Parker has a habit of laughing when she talks about the darkness in her work. Like the film she made during her time as the official election artist for the UK in 2017, in a which a drone captured shadows falling across a bronze of Margaret Thatcher in the House of Commons: "She looked like Nosferatu. Haha!" Or the time she came under fire for inviting Wikileaks founder Julian Assange to be among the human-rights lawyers, activists and academics to sew contributions onto an enormous tapestry she made in 2015 recreating the Wikipedia entry for the Magna Carta, to mark its 800th anniversary: "Well I had murderers and rapists — because I had about 45 prisoners — so, you know! He fits quite well into that canon. Ha!"

Fierce reactions to her work are not unknown, such as when, in 2003, she tied a mile of string around Rodin's sculpture "The Kiss" at Tate Britain; a work that, like the embroidered Wikipedia page, is included in her new exhibition. The wrapped Rodin prompted protests the first time it was shown, and pearl-clutching in the papers — *The Guardian* bewailed Parker's "destructive fantasies" — though she showed it in Manchester in 2015 and, perhaps in a sign of more enlightened times, "nobody made a whisper about it". (The only brouhaha she has caused recently came when she posted a Wordle answer on her Instagram account: "I didn't realise everyone was doing the same one! I got abuse raining down on me...")

When she was growing up in Cheshire, the middle of three girls to an English father and a German mother — who had served as a nurse for the Luftwaffe — the art on the walls of the Parker family home was certainly less controversial: reproductions of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers", Constable's "The Hay Wain", Turner's "The Fighting Temeraire". Parker "loved them all", but the idea of experimenting with art herself was almost unfathomable. The family kept a smallholding on which everything — from milking the cows to scything hay to stringing up tomatoes in the greenhouse — was done by hand. "There was a lot of labour," says Parker, "and I had to forfeit play to do it. Play was what I wanted to do the most, and I suppose that's what art is for me now: a form of play. Of work and play."

Labour-intensiveness is perhaps a defining feature of Parker's output: from the intricate Wikipedia tapestry to the carefully strung-up shed fragments, an idea that Parker traces back to the tomatoes in the greenhouse and "those repetitive tasks I spent my whole childhood →

Above, from top: 2003's 'The Distance (A Kiss With String Attached)'; 'War Room', Parker's 2015 work comprised of the punched paper sheets left over from the mass production of poppies for Remembrance Day

© Cornelia Parker | Michael Pollard | Photo © Tate photography. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage 2022

Above: Parker's 'Perpetual Canon' (2004) installation was created from 60 compressed instruments once belonging to a brass band

doing". After studying at the Gloucestershire College of Art and Design and Wolverhampton Polytechnic in the 1970s, one of her works involved making hundreds of casts of souvenirs and nick-nacks — a tiny Empire State Building, a miniature Sacré-Cœur — out of liquid lead that she prepared on her kitchen stove. "That wasn't a good idea," she admits, as her cat Belle (who, unlike Wordle spoilers, is a regular feature on her Instagram feed) comes strolling into the kitchen, "though neither were lots of other things I was doing. I just liked improvising".

Another recurring idea in Parker's work, like the exploded-yet-suspended shed and the squashed-yet-floating silverware, is the tension between destructive and restorative instincts. She has a term for this impulse: "The work I make is almost like a sympathetic magic," she says. "That idea that comes up in religious rites and rituals in lots of cultures, that you have to lose something to gain something. When you make sacrifices, when you put blood on the land, you will get a good harvest."

When she made the flattened silverware, Parker explains, the house in Leytonstone she lived in was under threat of demolition to make way for the new M11 link road; she was both enacting the worst that could happen, and trying to stop it. The week after we meet, she will film Union flags being made at a factory in Swansea. Then she plans to run the footage backwards, so that the flags appear to be coming unstitched. More and more, she thinks, her work is being haunted by "ghost politics".

As for her own legacy, something that having a show of this scale might invite, Parker is phlegmatic. She admits that it's nice to imagine the exploded shed might be around for a while: "I like the idea of the explosion getting older and older, and it being a 100-year-old explosion, or a 200-year-old explosion. Because it becomes a kind of time capsule." But, like all of us, Parker has bigger concerns: "I'm more worried about the future of the human race," she says. "The way things are going, it's not looking so great."

Sometimes trying to stop time can be both ridiculous and sublime. A work Parker particularly likes is "Artist's Breath", a 1960 series by Piero Manzoni — one of the artists, alongside Marcel Duchamp and Yves Klein, whom she names as particular influences — for which he blew up balloons and attached them to plinths. "And museums have still got them, with no breath. It's so funny!" Parker says, tickled at the thought of the balloons now reduced to flat splodges of decaying rubber. Still, she spares a thought for Manzoni, in some ways a kindred spirit. "I mean, he died at 29. His own sympathetic magic didn't work." ○

Cornelia Parker is at Tate Britain, London SW1, from 18 May to 22 October; tate.org.uk

© Cornelia Parker. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage 2022

New Perspectives

Imagine a finely crafted mechanical timepiece,
inspired by Japanese tradition with a modern,
fresh touch.
That timepiece is here.
Presage

Japanese beauty,
crafted into a mechanical timepiece.

PRESAGE

SEIKO

SINCE 1881

Leave it to beavers

Britain's coolest gardeners prepare to rewild Chelsea

By Johnny Davis

This interview with Urquhart & Hunt begins in unfortunate circumstances for the UK's premier landscape gardeners. It is February and Storm Eunice has been battering the country. The O2 Arena has had some of its roof blown off, lorries have toppled over on the M40 and the TV news is full of people standing too close to wave-lashed promenades. At Adam Hunt's home near Bruton, Somerset — just down the road from his partner in the business, Lulu Urquhart — the guttering has broken, his roof has a new hole in it, and the electricity has gone. Worst of all, a 300-year-old oak has been uprooted from his drive and blocks the front door. He comes and goes on Zoom (that'll be the electricity), so Urquhart holds her iPhone up to the screen and shows me a photo of the door/tree situation. It's not good.

When Hunt's connection drops out one final time, we decide to quit while we're behind and regroup 48 hours later. "I didn't cry," a newly loud-and-clear Hunt says, of the oak. "Other people did. I was very upset. But it had structural faults."

And on the power outage: "Everyone said, 'That must have been nice, having no electricity.' But my eyesight is so bad, I can't read by candle. It took me an hour to heat the water on the gas to have three inches of lukewarm water in the bath."

For a pair of environmentalists, their home set-ups are instructive, even observed through a laptop screen. Dogs and children come and go in Urquhart's kitchen, while someone tops up her glass with fizz, as it's her birthday tomorrow. Hunt's study is overflowing with books, and a painting of the hound Bran, from the tales of Fionn mac Cumhaill, hangs askew behind him.

It's in keeping with their bohemian gardens, done in the style of the "New Perennial" movement: a less formal, more naturalistic approach, where the seasonal life-cycle of a plant is a bigger priority than, say, the colour of flowers. There's more emphasis on letting nature do its thing, after plants have been layered and grouped in a common habitat. It looks wild, because it is — but it's

Above: Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt, the duo behind the garden and landscape design company Urquhart & Hunt

Above: Urquhart & Hunt's signature naturalistic planting style is shown in this late summer border

also been tamed. There's an ecological aspect: biodiversity is encouraged, herbicides are not. It is horticulture's current in-season style, of which the Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf is its most celebrated exponent.

Urquhart & Hunt has been doing this for 15 years, a time that has earned the practice a certain calibre of upscale, buzzy client. The expansive gardens at Babington House, the private members' club in Somerset, are the company's design. It created a courtyard display for the fashion retailer Matchesfashion around a Victorian glasshouse in London. And for the art gallery Hauser & Wirth's West Country outpost, in collaboration with Oudolf, over 26,000 herbaceous perennials were used to help convert a derelict farm into a pioneering, world-class arts centre. The team also worked with an Islamic-garden specialist on an award-winning eco-mosque in Cambridge.

This summer, Urquhart & Hunt makes its debut at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show with a beaver habitat. The "Rewilding Britain" landscape garden will feature a beaver dam, a "riparian meadow" of the kind beavers create when they partially flood a riverbank, and favourite trees of beavers, including hazel and field maples. Beavers became extinct in the UK in the 16th century and have only just started to be reintroduced. Urquhart & Hunt wants to show how they promote biodiversity and are excellent "ecosystem engineers".

"We have to live alongside wild animals," says Hunt. "We can't say, 'You're inconvenient, you can't live here.' We can't see them disappear."

For the show, they'll take a rewilded landscape and condense it. They identify wolves, rabbits and wild ponies on Exmoor as ecosystem engineers, too, but went with beavers as, Hunt says, "there's water, so there's a lot of different habitats". Plus, presumably, the Royal Horticultural Society isn't ready for the wolves just yet.

"To do it honestly is hard," Hunt continues. "We talk about it all the time. We can't just do a pastiche of what designers think a beaver landscape looks like."

Today, Hunt has returned from an eight-hour round trip to a reclaimed-timber yard in Essex, looking at elms and oaks.

"I got a bit timbered-out," he sighs. "After two hours, they all look the same. But I think we got what we need."

The CFS, this year, has a green theme — in the environmental sense — and was on board with Urquhart & Hunt's concept from the off.

"It still puts us up against an edge," Hunt says. "Chelsea is Chelsea and everyone wants to see beautiful gardens."

"It's quite shocking, a beaver landscape," says Urquhart. "It's haunting and quietening. But with it comes this plethora of awe of what's happening on a deeper level. But it's a mess! It looks like the swamp in *The NeverEnding Story*. You think we're going to pull a horse out. We're all out there, the full team [they employ five people], on a beaver landscape, thinking, 'Are we brave enough to do this?' This is a really big one."

"It will be beautiful," Hunt says.

Urquhart's background is in medicinal ayurvedic herbs via organic farming, trying to "transpose the herb laws of India onto the herb laws of Britain". Hunt, meanwhile, has a master's degree in plant ecology and was involved in the start-up of Trees for London, a greening scheme that became Trees for Cities. "Then I fled to the West Country," he says. There, he established the Walled Kitchen Gardens Network — which is how they met.

Hunt says it's Urquhart who's the aesthete. "I'm quite practical. I'm not saying Lu isn't. But she's got this beautiful aesthetic when she puts plants together, which, to be honest, I don't really have."

Aside from the world coming around to their style and philosophy — "We were never quite understood," chuckles Urquhart; "I knew we were right!" says Hunt — and the fact their gardens look amazing, I wonder what else explains their appeal. Why are they so trendy?

"Wow!" coughs Hunt. "Well, I'm not sure I think we are…"

But your clients are hip art galleries and private members' clubs. You're not troubled by commissions for city-centre roundabouts.

"Those both stem from our provenance, which is Somerset," says Urquhart. "I don't want to shine a light on Somerset, because far too much media has done that. But when we found out that Piet Oudolf was doing a garden here [he was already onboard with the Hauser & Wirth project], we would have had to move town if we hadn't got involved. We did go through a very rigorous selection process," she says. "He's like God."

Having pushed their naturalistic style this far, the goal now is to take it further. The beaver garden is a pretty good example. They're ambitious. Even with their the-Earth-is-a-living-system vibes, it doesn't mean they're total hippies.

"For Chelsea, we have to design every square inch perfectly," says Hunt.

"I want to get the trees out, so that we can look at their formation around the aspect of the sun, so that when they're judging it at sunrise, or sunset, we can see where the sun's falling," says Urquhart. "So we find the happy places on the garden. The level [of attention] we're going to is bonkers."

"We can't get a bronze," says Hunt. "We've got to get gold. If we get a silver, we'll just about be OK…" ○

The Chelsea Flower Show runs from 24 to 28 May at The Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London SW3

Dave Watts, Magnus Dennis

Designed with the future in mind.

The fully electric Audi e-tron GT.

Future is an attitude

Official fuel consumption for the Audi e-tron GT range in mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO_2 emissions: 0g/km.

The Audi e-tron GT is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Zero emissions while driving. Model shown is Audi RS e-tron GT. Features optional equipment.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Esquire

Designed with the future in mind.

The fully electric Audi e-tron GT.

Future is an attitude

Official fuel consumption for the Audi e-tron GT range in mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO_2 emissions: 0g/km.

The Audi e-tron GT is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Zero emissions while driving. Model shown is Audi RS e-tron GT. Features optional equipment.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

ELLE UK

When timing is everything.

Time does not respect machines, or the desire to be quick.
It exists to measure the margin of victory in a sport where precision is paramount.

The Bremont WR-22 is the first official timepiece designed in collaboration with Williams Racing, drawing on a shared British heritage and dedication to engineering expertise.

BREMONT
CHRONOMETERS

WILLIAMS
RACING

OFFICIAL PARTNER

Go for green

Because orange was last summer's wine

By Murray Clark
Photograph by Aaron Tilley

Pliny the Elder liked a drink — especially, rumour has it, if it came from the vines that grow between the Douro and Minho rivers. This region, in the top north-eastern corner of Portugal, is the cradle of a wine famed for its refreshing fizz. It is called vinho verde, and its popularity hasn't waned since the salad days of hard-partying classical thinkers.

It means "green wine" when directly translated from Portuguese. But that has nothing to do with the colour of its bubbling, mint-ish contents. "The vinho verde region in northern Portugal is also a very green district, which is where it really gets the name," says Joshua Castle, the head sommelier of the restaurant, bar and wine-disruptor Noble Rot. "Here, they make easy-going wines, and vinho verde has become so popular after the buzz of Chin Chin" — a hypey, smartly labelled drop that proved especially in demand with east-London types. "It's a cheap wine, it's crunchy, it's summery, and for the drinker who wants to go to the next level, there are single-grape varieties, too," making it perfect for oenophiles and binge-boozers alike.

A new summer wine is particularly welcome after the hangover from last year, when the flood of orange wine in bars and restaurants and on Instagram feeds threatened to drown us all. No one wants that. What we do want, however, is a wine that stands up without the Yassify filter of a holiday. "There's that thing — you love a wine abroad, and when you get it home, it's a bit shit," says Castle, with impressive directness. "But that doesn't happen with vinho verde. It tastes great wherever. You can have two or three bottles and it won't break the bank, and you won't be totally pissed either."

Some bottles are better than others. The Chin Chin is a good start. But Castle also recommends Aphros, a citrusy wine he describes as "really quite serious", alongside Quinta da Palmirinha ("a lovely finesse on the palate") and pretty much anything from Anselmo Mendes, "the guy most associated with vinho verde" — second only, of course, to the senior Pliny himself. ○

Noble Rot, 2 Greek Street, London W1; noblerot.co.uk

ALL NEW

RENAULT ARKANA E-TECH HYBRID

hybrid by nature

5 year warranty[1]

the official combined fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the all new Arkana e-tech 145 hybrid R.S. line are: 58.9 (4.8) and CO_2 emissions are 109 g/km.

wltp figures shown are for comparability purposes. actual real world driving results may vary depending on factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted after registration, weather conditions, driving styles and vehicle load. [1]first of 100,000 miles or 5 years. for conditions visit renault.co.uk/warranty. uk spec may vary.

Renault recommends Castrol

renault.co.uk

Case study: the Royal Oak Selfwinding Flying Tourbillon Extra-Thin, price on request, by Audemars Piguet

‘Why don’t they conceal the bolts?’

The Royal Oak at 50

By Johnny Davis

Nobody knows how many watches are made each year, though 1.2 billion has been deemed a reasonable guess. Whatever the figure, you’d be hard-pressed to tell most of them apart. Still fewer have become recognised as design classics. The Royal Oak is one. With its octagonal case and exposed screw-heads, it was unusual when it was launched in 1972. It looked weird. Even weirder was its positioning. It was a sports watch, sold as a luxury item but made of steel.

“At a price like this, why don’t they conceal the bolts?” asked one provocative print ad, put out by the watch’s own manufacturer, Audemars Piguet. “Would you buy a Rembrandt for the canvas?” posited another.

It was seen as a huge risk when it was created by the eminent watch designer Gérald Genta. History shows it turned out to be one of the smartest moves a watch company ever made — the Royal Oak is said to account for well over half of AP’s annual sales: in the tens of millions.

Over five decades, its desirability has seldom waned. As recently as last year it was being heralded as “Hollywood’s Favourite Watch”, seen on the wrists of a new era of zeitgeisty celebs including Travis Scott, Drake and Steph Curry.

In this, its 50th year, AP has been launching a whole raft of special editions and anniversary-marking versions — all of which have sold out.

The Royal Oak Selfwinding Flying Tourbillon Extra-Thin is unlikely to break that run. Watch aficionados will note it is the first time AP has put a flying tourbillon — the gravity-correcting mechanism at six o’clock — in a 39mm extra-thin case. Also that it has managed to combine it with a self-winding mechanism, a feat of micro-mechanics that has already earned this watch its own engineering nickname, the “RD#3”.

Sure, that’s not a name you normally associate with a luxury watch. Or anything, really. But then you imagine Audemars Piguet hasn’t spent much of the last 50 years wishing it had simply followed the crowd. ○

audemarspiguet.com

Eastern promises

Can the biggest Lotus ever built wake up British motoring's sleeping giant?

By Will Hersey

The latest in a series of streamlined comeback models, the Eletre is the first all-electric luxury SUV in the Lotus line-up

Unfairly or not, Norfolk has a reputation as one of England's sleepier counties. And in recent years, its once-celebrated car brand Lotus, whose HQ has been nestled amid farmland near Hethel since 1966, has appeared to be in a rather terminal slumber of its own.

The brand that ruled the 1960s and 1970s on the F1 track, while serving up innovative and accessible sports cars like the Esprit on the road and even providing a submersible version for James Bond in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, had acquired a somewhat dated feel, frozen in the era of the trouser press and fax machine. Lotus wasn't quite at the Betamax stage, but you get the picture.

In 2017, its newest car on offer was the 10-year-old Evora, and there were no new models in the pipeline. As current managing director Matt Windle confirms, it was a company "on its knees".

And then came an offer from Geely, the Chinese auto giant that had previously revived the fortunes of Volvo and launched its slick electric sister brand Polestar. The Geely approach, broadly, is to find an ailing brand and add value, with a view to an IPO further down the line.

Smelling salts were about to be administered, followed by a wet flannel to the face. The ensuing transformation is, according to Windle, unprecedented in the car business.

"You think, 'Where do we start with this task?'" remembers Windle, a CAD operating apprentice at Lotus in the 1990s who returned when the takeover was announced. "Everybody coming into work was walking across a potholed carpark, which wasn't brilliant in terms of mindset. So one of the first things we did was put down some new tarmac and went from there."

When that rather hefty to-do list was first compiled, Lotus was producing 1,500 cars a year. In 2022, it'll be 4,000, next year 10,000 and, thanks to a new plant in Wuhan, 150,000 are planned for 2027, by when all its cars will be electric.

"You say, 'Is tomorrow OK?' and [Geely] say 'No, how about yesterday?'" Windle says. "The speed of change is incredible."

One major problem was convincing long-serving staff that it was all legit. They'd seen a few false dawns, particularly in the wake of the infamous 2010 Paris Motor Show, when an outlandish management ploy to launch five cars and become a global powerhouse proved to be castles built from sand.

"Initially, it did get me down a bit that we weren't getting the message across," Windle says. "So, after a while, I realised that we just needed to demonstrate it through evidence."

→

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu

Above: the Eletre's driver-focused cockpit features a high-centre console and sustainable materials by textile company Kvadrat

Exhibit A was the £2 million Evija, an all-electric hypercar that set the tone for a new air-sculpted design style and showcased Lotus's electric and engineering prowess, honed via its consultancy arm, Lotus Engineering.

Next came the Emira, a £60,000-plus mid-engined two-seater that is being built in a new Hethel factory, with supercar looks that may have some higher-priced competitors feeling a little sweaty-palmed. It will be the last combustion-engine car Lotus produces.

The Emira also provided Lotus with a chance to prove its interiors game — never a strength in the olden days, but now essential. What self-respecting premium car brand doesn't offer massaging seats and vegan trim?

Which brings us to the announcement of the Eletre, with a name that sounds like a mistake on a 14-year-old's French test (apparently *életre* means "coming to life" in Hungarian), but is in fact a luxury electric SUV that will determine just how successful Lotus's latest comeback will be.

"We wanted to make it so advanced and so appealing that it would draw new people to the brand, and then somebody might go, 'Oh, they do sports cars as well,'" says Windle.

Of its future rivals, the aggressively styled Eletre feels spiritually closest to the Lamborghini Urus. It's aggressively fast, too: the sub three-second 0-60 time certainly justifies the "hyper" SUV status it's carrying with it.

Visually, it continues the Evija's aerodynamically carved panelling, which Lotus is calling "porosity". As with Lotuses of the past, the designers have tried to get the mass over the wheels for the stance of "a mid-engined SUV".

Lightness is another Lotus trademark, but not something that translates easily into the world of tech-laden people-carriers.

"I can promise you this is the heaviest Lotus ever," says Windle, "but we have tried to make it the lightest in its category. As a full EV, the weight impacts directly onto range as well as performance."

Lotus has clearly made a particular effort to create some stand-out tech moments, perhaps partly with hi-tech Chinese buyers in mind, but also just to show the world that it can.

The grille is made up of triangular petals that open up when needed to allow the battery pack to cool, and close when they aren't to reduce drag. When the car unlocks as you approach, the grille performs this sequence as a little show for your entertainment, and perhaps that of any onlookers.

The Eletre will also be ready for Level Four autonomous driving — that's the level when humans are only optional. The Lidar cameras that enable this are hidden from sight, only coming out of the roof when required in a manner that was apparently inspired by those famous pop-up headlights on the Esprit. How car brands now would kill for a retro reference like that.

"People say a Lotus shouldn't have these driver aids, but why not?" says Windle. "Once you get out of the city and want to be a bit more adventurous with the driving, just turn it off."

A super-hi-tech SUV certainly sounds a long way from the Lotus comfort zone, though Windle describes the process of developing it as "comfortable", thanks to his prior experience and working alongside new teams in Europe and China.

Clearly Lotus is relishing its chance to mix it once more with the big guns, this time as an ambitious international operation rather than a plucky British underdog.

"Geely understands the value in Lotus being British," says Windle, adding that "Volvo has never felt more Swedish." The Eletre was officially designed in the UK, and London, not Beijing, was chosen for its global launch. And yes, the Lotus HQ remains, for now, in a freshly tarmacked corner of rural Norfolk. ○

lotuscars.com

Great design never tasted so good.

The New Weber SmokeFire STEALTH Edition barbecue. For incredible wood-fired flavour, unparalleled heat and smart technology.

reddot winner 2022

SMOKEFIRE STEALTH EDITION

Impress your guests with perfectly barbecued food every time. The New Weber SmokeFire has unrivalled 315˚C high heat for beautifully seared steak, while its smart technology guides you step-by-step from ribs to pulled pork. Discover the authentic wood-fired flavour of the natural and sustainable Weber wood pellets, available in 6 flavours.

Discover the new Weber SmokeFire at weber.com

DISCOVER WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Anything
but ordinary

DOWNLOAD OUR APP TO SHOP NOW

Block star: Louis Vuitton's Mondrian-inspired look for spring/summer 2022

Colour blocking

Piet Mondrian is menswear's artist of the season

By Murray Clark

You are familiar with the work of Piet Mondrian. Riffs on his famous grids of white squares with intermittent blocks of colour have been stamped onto all things life-sized (the sides of The Hague's City Hall building) and screen-sized (a Katy Perry music video). But, like Warhol's tin of soup, ubiquity can midwife a certain strain of naff: Mondrian is widely considered to be one of the greatest artists of the 20th century, and yet many would avoid a print in their living room like it was a "Live, Laugh, Love" prosecco cooler.

Wardrobes are a different matter, though. At the spring/summer shows, Mondrian's brush was felt everywhere as menswear went both geometric and colourful — and nowhere was it more visible than at Jil Sander. As a brand known for its clean lines and cloudy palette, the sweater vests and knitwear were much chirpier than usual, and coated in blocks of black, white, blue and red. At Casablanca, De Stijl went a little kitsch in co-ords that stripped a postcard sunset into squares, circles and crescents of burnt orange, green and blue. And, for the late Virgil Abloh's final show at Louis Vuitton, one good and mad overcoat corrupted the Mondrian code into a frenetic chequerboard with the house monogram glitched inside.

The renaissance hasn't extended to the world of interiors yet. But in Paris, Mondrian's back in fashion. ○

CAMBRIA
russellandbromley.co.uk

Russell&Bromley
LONDON

NOMOS
GLASHÜTTE

175 Years
Watchmaking
Glashütte

Tangente neomatik 41 Update midnight blue. The unique NOMOS ring date with superluminova is patented and easy to set—in both directions. This is made possible by the in-house automatic caliber DUW 6101 within, which is highly precise and also features a patented date mechanism. Available at select retailers, such as **Berry's** in York; **Chisholm Hunter** in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Manchester, Nottingham and Kent; **James Porter & Son** in Glasgow; **Reid & Sons** in Newcastle; **Watches of Switzerland** and **Wempe**, both in London. As well as here: **nomos-glashuette.com**

Breaking the mould

Why 'fungus' is the latest word in luxury

By Johnny Davis

Above: Hermès is the creator of materials for their 'Victoria' bag in Sylvania from Fine Mycelium, H plume canvas and Evercalf calfskin

Hermès is famous for its handbags, and for the waiting lists attached to them. Last year, its latest must-have accessory made headlines for a reason that was fashionable even by Hermès's esteemed standards. The new version of the £3,500 "Victoria" bag was made from Sylvania, a bio-textile leather substitute grown in a lab. Specifically, it was made from fungus.

As an exemplar of a sea-change in the fashion industry, you'd be hard-pressed to come up with a more dramatic example than the uber-chic 185-year-old French atelier, noted for its traditional tanneries and bespoke leather goods, pivoting to launch a bag made out of mould.

But then, times have changed. Luxury brands now employ whole departments to address sustainability. Renting and recycling have become the only names to drop on the red carpet. New Levi's 501s are made from old Levi's 501s. And vast sums of cash are being ploughed into developing fabrics that could replace our reliance on harmful environmental practices. Tommy Hilfiger has made trainers from apple skin; Paul Smith created shoes from pineapple leaves. Grapes are also a growth area, used by Pangaia in place of leather.

In January, it was announced that MycoWorks, whose mushroom "leather" was used to make the Hermès bag, had raised $125 million in a Series C funding round, firing the Californian start-up to the forefront of the bio-alternative material race.

"It's an amazing moment for us," MycoWorks co-founder Sophia Wang tells *Esquire*. "The primary goal for this funding is that it's going to enable our first full-scale production facility."

At present, MycoWorks operates from a boxy factory in Emeryville on the shores of San Francisco Bay, and can only produce Sylvania, which is derived from MycoWorks's pioneering biomaterial, Fine Mycelium, in small quantities.

Its new facility across the country in South Carolina will more than double that, adding 400 employees to its current 150. "It will enable mass-production volumes of several million square feet of Fine Mycelium a year," Wang says. "That's a huge jump for us. At the moment, we're working with luxury exclusively, and growing our capacity helps us to expand that range."

Asked what partnerships are in the wings, Wang's answer is both reticent and revealing.

"So far, the brand partnership that we've been able to publicise is in a bag," she says. "But any place that you imagine leather or a leather alternative might go, we can go. We're looking at footwear, fashion accessories and beyond."

That's a huge market.

"We have our work cut out for us," Wang says, smiling.

Fashion creates high levels of pollution, from overproduction of clothing and synthetic fibres and also from animal-leather production. Many of the first-generation vegan alternatives used plastic, which comes with its own environmental consequences, not least the fact that it can take hundreds of years to decompose. Mycelium is the fungus's underground networks of threads (mushrooms are the fruiting bodies) and can be grown quickly, easily and in inexhaustible supplies. It's also versatile. MycoWorks can control →

each sheet's size, strength, flexibility and density, adjusting the specs as it goes.

"People are shocked when they first encounter this material," Wang says. "They're like, 'This feels like leather. How is it not leather?' They're delighted and surprised. It's a natural material that can perform like leather but is absolutely different, and of its own nature."

MycoWorks' story may sound pat: West Coast start-up harnesses new tech to upend an old business practice and sails off into the sunset, its pockets stuffed with dollars. But it's way better than that. The company's other co-founder is Philip Ross, a chef and artist who got into mycelium via recreational drugs in the 1980s while studying at the San Francisco Art Institute. He made ends meet by working shifts as an Aids-hospice worker, picking up batches of medical marijuana for patients suffering terminal illnesses. (This was decades before it was legalised.)

At "pot clubs" he discovered reishi, a kidney-shaped mushroom popular in Chinese medicine for the boosts it apparently bestows on the human immune system. Ross began harvesting his own. Back at his studio, he started experimenting with woodchips as a food source for his crops and realised he could manipulate their texture, colour and consistency — and build stuff. ("The question isn't, 'What can fungus do?'" Ross noted. "It's, 'What do you want it to do?'")

He began exhibiting his lumpy new art in the form of chairs, stools and other furniture. He also recreated the to-scale fuselage, wings and cockpit of a Boeing 747. By 2007, he'd teamed up with Wang, then a student at the University of California, Berkeley, studying the decidedly non-entrepreneurial combination of poetry and dance.

"I worked with Phil as an artist's assistant, and we put together an exhibit on the history of bio-reactors through the lens of culture and design," she says. "Mycelium was a new element."

They began applying it to new product categories — including an option for leather. In 2016, the fashion houses came calling.

"I'm really proud that we don't reach out to brands," Wang says. "From the very first product session, we've been inundated with requests."

MycoWorks now has competition — "the other companies that we've inspired around the world," as Wang diplomatically puts it. But it holds more than 65 patents for the first mass-market cow-free biomaterial. The Hermès connection is also something money can't buy. In Dana Thomas' eye-popping 2007 book *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Lustre*, an evisceration of industry practices, the venerable Parisian house is held up as an almost solitary bastion of staying true to its founding principle of luxury craftsmanship as something unique and long-lasting.

"They have such deep knowledge and respect for the creative process," Wang says. "Their brand and ours share an admiration for the level of craftsmanship that goes into creating something of this quality."

On the other hand, there will presumably always be a huge swathe of luxury consumers for whom a top-dollar bag is by definition a leather bag, crafted in Europe — not one created using American woodchip and fungus.

Does Wang think that MycoWorks spells the end for leather?

"I actually don't," she says. "That's also about our consumption of beef. The two are in partnership and that's a much longer arc for human history. Just as leather craftspeople are learning a lot from us, we're learning a lot from them. They've been in business for thousands of years, making beautiful pieces.

"We're creating an option for consumers, where something made of mycelium might be closer in line with their brand values."

Perhaps the biggest catalyst for change will come from outside of any company. Like fur before it, leather might simply fall out of fashion. ○

mycoworks.com

Below: a sheet of reishi derived from Fine Mycelium, the material that put MycoWorks at the front of the bio-textile pack

Lindsey Filowitz

WOLF

ESTD 1834

PROTECT YOUR LEGACY

BRITISH RACING

WOLF1834.COM

MEET THE PERFECT SHORTS

With eight different styles - from sportive to smart - MR MARVIS has the perfect shorts with an ultimate fit and for every occasion. Our shorts are handmade in Portugal using high-quality fabrics including stretch cotton, airy piqué and lightweight linen. In over 60 sophisticated colours; which one will you choose?

FIND YOURS NOW ON MRMARVIS.CO.UK

Acqua di Parma's Zafferano cologne, £201/100ml, is available only from Harrods

Gold dust

The scent of summer comes in a *very* limited edition

By Caroline Garner
Photograph by David Newton

Known in its native Iran as red dust, or gold dust, the saffron used in Acqua di Parma's new fragrance Zafferano is one of the world's most precious spices. Harvested by hand at dawn, the saffron pistils are separated from the rest of the flower and left to dry in the sun. Only then can the fragrance be extracted. This summer, Zafferano is available exclusively at Harrods in London. Part of the brand's Signatures of the Sun collection, the cologne, in its art deco-inspired glass bottle, combines the saffron with bergamot, mandarin and orange for a lively, modern and unmistakably Italian scent. Get it fast, though. This stuff is… well, you know. ○

WATCH AND
GO DEEPER

That moment

when you envision life outside your bubble.

Go deeper exploring a world
beyond your imagination.
Our luxurious Expedition ships take
you to the ends of the earth and
our elite Expedition Team brings
you up close to rare wildlife by
submarine, Zodiac®, and kayak.
What a way to expand your mind.

This is your moment.™

SEABOURN®

0344 338 8615 • Seabourn.com

JAMIE
REDKNAPP

SKECHERS®

ArchFit®

PODIATRIST CERTIFIED ARCH SUPPORT

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION FOR ALL-DAY COMFORT

FEATURES & BENEFITS

PODIATRIST DESIGNED SHAPE

COMFORT ARCH SUPPORT

SHAPE OF INSOLE WAS DEVELOPED WITH OVER 20 YEARS OF DATA

MACHINE WASHABLE

WWW.SKECHERS.CO.UK

JOURNAL

The Windsors

HER, AND ME, AND THE ROYAL WE

Andrew O'Hagan

Getty Images

MY FRIEND ROGER MICHELL DIED ABOUT A YEAR AGO. He was a funny sort of Englishman, both side-splitting and peculiar, and during our lunches we would often talk about how nice it was to have a ruling family so much more dysfunctional than one's own. I mean, if the Windsors hadn't existed, British doctors would've been forced to invent them: they're swifter than Xanax and much more of an uplift than Prozac. They're a miracle cure for aches and pains. Roger was keen on uplift — he directed *Notting Hill* and *The Duke* — and the thing he sent me, just before he died, was an assemblage of footage about the Queen, which is set to be a future film. The film showed multiple images of the monarch through the camera lens from her childhood onwards, seen from the public's point of view.

→

POV is everything when it comes to the royals. I'm talking about the Windsors here, not what Chips Channon, in his hilariously snobbish diaries, calls "the half-crown royalties". I'm really talking about the Queen. She's the interesting one, because she's so good at it, and because she has a kind of instinct for survival that makes everybody around her look like they're in a Ray Cooney farce next to her Shakespeare. My general opinion — that they should all be taken to the guillotine tomorrow morning — is somewhat interrupted by the Queen herself, who seems so patently nice and so specifically competent. If it were to be a choice between Her Majesty and some crooked president, the kind of damaged campaigner with pockets full of crumpled tenners, then I'd go for her, despite my reservations about rulers and kingdoms and Commonwealths and all that shite.

But perhaps I'm just soft on her because she knows me. Sure, she forgets, but the Queen first met me when I was nine years old. It was no big deal. I was serving at that time with the Kilwinning Cub Scouts and we were stationed at the Magnum, a leisure centre in the Royal Borough of Irvine where everybody was soon to lose their virginity. We didn't that day, in 1977, because we were quite young, plus the Queen was there opening the centre, and it would have been rude to start snogging Angela Doogan and going for "top" or "bottom" — that's how foreplay worked in Ayrshire in the years before the internet — while the lady with the white face and the flowery swimming cap was doing the rounds. I was in the front row and trying to ditch the Duke of Edinburgh, who was asking us about cooking sausages. I wanted to see Her Maj and work out if she was real. She approached the bench (for judgement comes strong in a pack of nine-year-olds) and smiled like a person on a postage stamp who was quite chuffed with herself.

"She looks like plastic," said Russell Stirling, to my right.

"No, marshmallow," offered David Griffin, on the left.

She's often blamed for it, but I think it's sort of amazing the way the Queen has sailed through nearly a century of British contradictions being constantly upbraided and renewed. In 1948, with the British Nationality Act, we told the empire that it would always be, in some way, British; the specific way being they would have British passports. The Queen spoke to those hundreds of millions of foreign citizens as if they were family. After 1962, when we legislated to begin keeping them out, and even more so after immigration legislation in 1968 and 1971, she spoke as if those banned or harassed people still "belonged" to Britain, although a great many of them could no longer gain entry, and those who did suffered racism. The Queen sounded like a conservative lady with liberal passions, but she managed to hold it together in the face of gross de-definitions of what Britishness actually meant. In his wonderful, recent book *We're Here Because You Were There*, Ian Sanjay Patel puts his finger on it. "It is hard to overestimate," he writes, "the initial purchase of British idealism in the post-war world — the way in which it saw its brand of imperialism as a liberal and progressive force, in contrast to the unreconstructed racism of, say, apartheid South Africa."

The Queen has long been the standard bearer of that "idealism". She rides the contradictions and moves with the times, never apologising, never explaining. That job has become much harder, of course, in the era of Harry and Meghan, where explaining is the only mission and apologising (or seeking apologies) is a creed. I should point out that the Queen hasn't yet sought her old friend's advice about this, though I did make it quite clear to her, at Buckingham Palace, with a single look, that I was available for any mansplaining. The occasion was the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens's birth and we shook hands. "A novelist, eh?" said the Duke of Edinburgh, as if the job was somewhere lower on the chart of human achievement than a cooker of camp-fire sausages, but I didn't want to argue. We each have our own ideas of progress. The Queen's consort, unlike her, seemed to wear his white supremacy rather heavily, and was to my mind stuck somewhere in the 1930s.

In that kind of company, the Queen stands out. She doesn't let the side down and the fact is she's a lot more intelligent than her children. Seamus Heaney once had a very nice conversation with her about the war in Vietnam. She had things to say, she had views to express, and was perfectly happy airing them in a private room. Anthony Blunt, late Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures and one of the Cambridge Five spies, loved talking to her, a fact that became very useful to Alan Bennett in his play *A Question of Attribution*. "I suppose if Mr Bacon was to paint one, then it would be called 'The Screaming Queen'," she says to a bemused Blunt. When you stop laughing, you realise that perhaps Bennett caught something true: the Queen is more self-knowing than they usually are, so much more than her sister, or her sociopathic son Andrew, or her mother, who was brave in her own way but addicted to nonsense and addled by afternoon "drinkies".

Maybe one can doubt the institution but like the person. I wanted to say that to my old friend not long ago, at a sporting fixture. She was there to give a cup, and there was no stifling of yawns or lapses in conversation. She was, of course, in the vicinity of terrible men with terrible views but, looking at her, I felt a kind of companionship. This lady had been around all my life and I didn't feel like condemning her. I regretted things, I abhorred things, as she probably does herself, but the old dear was "good people", as my 18-year-old son might say in a burst of everyday tolerance. She has been the Queen of Contradictions, but she has grown with them, been changed by them, and so might we. Perhaps it was "the Royal 'we'" that some of us had always been looking for, a multiplicity of island-dwellers whose "we-ness" was guaranteed by an old lady in a funny hat. ○

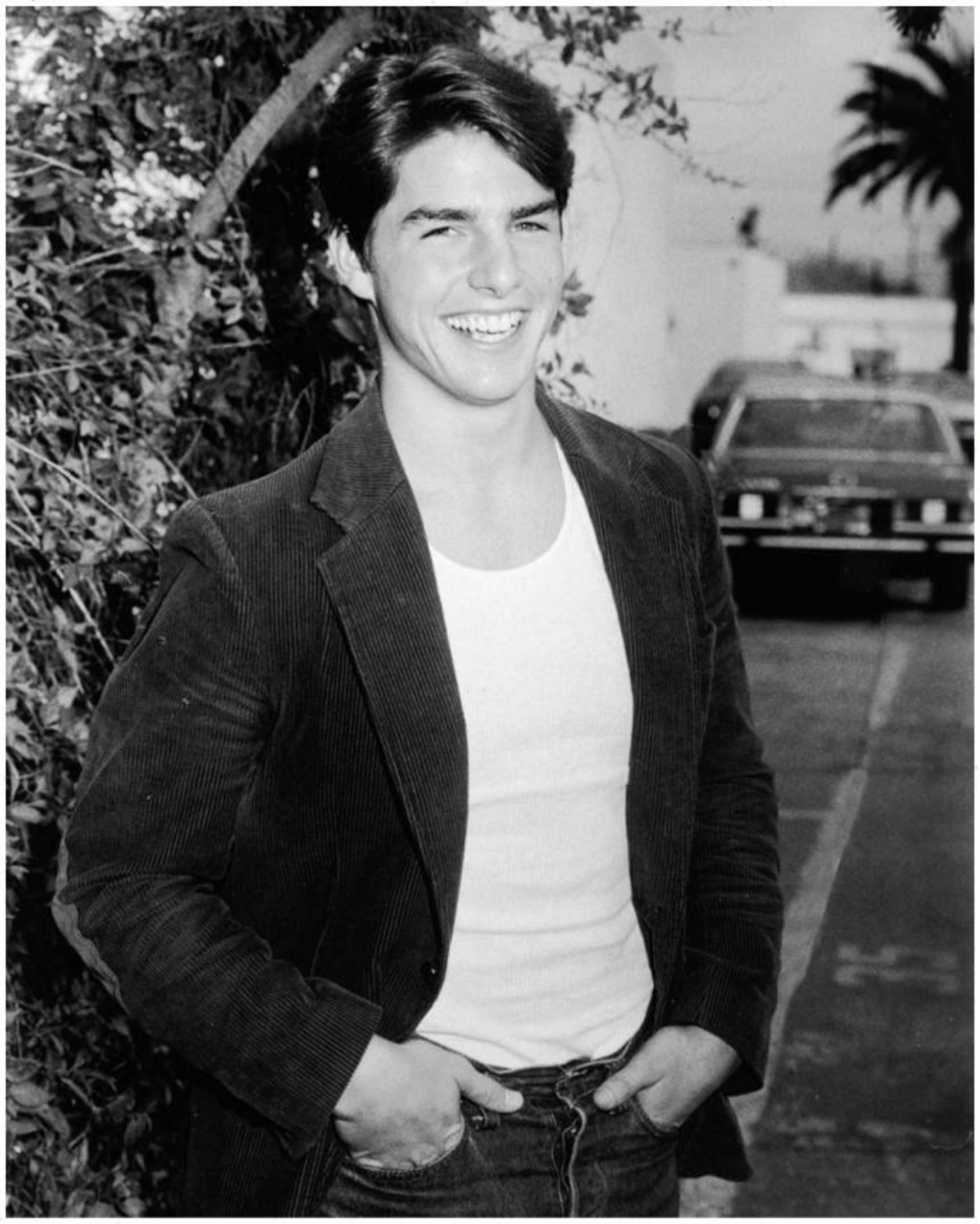
Showbiz

ABOVE THE TITLE

Peter Bradshaw

THIS SUMMER, TOM CRUISE TURNS 60 — to the astonishment of us all. His face may be a little sleeker and puffier, the nose and jawline discreetly modified, the hair richly ungrey. But Tom Cruise is the Eighth Wonder of the physical world. The bod is tight. The buttocks are granite. The gaze is focused. The teeth are dazzling. The career is strong. Basically, he looks better than most 40-year-olds. He doesn't look that different from the boyish Lt Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, the speedy US Navy Flyer he played in the legendary action spectacular *Top Gun*, in 1986, that propelled him into ionospheric celebrity. And, of course, he's in this summer's sequel, for which he will be on the Cannes red carpet— *Top Gun: Maverick*, unself-consciously doing much the same thing.

I watched *Top Gun* again the other day for the first time since it came out. What struck me was not so much the homoeroticism, based on the locker-room rapport between unclothed alpha males ("I've got a hard-on." "Don't tease me"),



Getty Images

famously satirised by Quentin Tarantino in a monologue in the 1994 film *Sleep With Me*. Actually, it was the beach volleyball scene in which Maverick (Cruise) and Goose (Anthony Edwards) are winning handsomely and, every time they get a point, Cruise gives Edwards two resounding high-fives, up high and down low, with smacks that must have reverberated up the Western seaboard like sonic booms. My own palms were flinching and tingling at the sheer machismo. Poor Edwards must have been in agony.

Tom Cruise is the last Hollywood icon standing, the last *real* movie star. In an age of franchises, intellectual property and superheroes, Cruise is the defiant survivor of a time when the currency was the superstars themselves, with their unchanging personalities and their professional duty to keep young and beautiful. Despite all the affection I have for the great man, he is a living embodiment of the theory that true stars don't have something extra; they have, in fact, something missing, some weird gap or void into which the audience projects its desire.

From his early manhood in the 1980s, Tom Cruise could "open" a movie: he was an "above-the-title" star, that quaint phrase coming from an age of titles being spelt out on marquees. Most actors of Cruise's age will have long since accepted their character roles as fathers or grandfathers. They will have taken mature "bearded" parts, like 44-year-old George Clooney in *Syriana* or 57-year-old Tom Hanks in *Captain Phillips*. Not Tom.

Actually, it's not quite true to say that Tom Cruise doesn't do beards. He grew a wild and straggly beard for *Born on the Fourth of July*, when he played the radically anti-war Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic; and he grew a neat, tailored beard, indicating wisdom and inner strength, for *The Last Samurai*, portraying a US cavalry officer in 19th-century Japan. But these were not ageing-process beards or silver-fox beards. And he has — for good-sport laughs — pretended to be fat and bald as a movie producer rocking out in triumph in the comedy *Tropic Thunder*. But, in each case, the point is that the fiercely attractive pretty-boy Cruise is obviously there underneath.

He has worked with the biggest directors in the business: for Steven Spielberg as the star of *War of the Worlds*, for Paul Thomas Anderson, playing the chillingly misogynistic seduction coach in *Magnolia*, and for Stanley Kubrick in *Eyes Wide Shut*, painfully exploring a marital crisis opposite his then-wife Nicole Kidman.

But he was always Tom Cruise, and there is something eerie in the way he has been box-office gold for over four decades. In the US domestic-revenue charts for 1985, newcomer Tom Cruise came in at number 15 (number one was Chevy Chase). In 1987, he slipped to 18 (the highest position that year was held by Steve Guttenberg, of the *Police Academy* movies) but took the top spot in 1988, knocking Guttenberg down to three. He came third in 1990 when Tom Hanks was in first place, and won bronze in 1994 when Wesley Snipes took gold. In 2005, Keanu Reeves was victorious, while Cruise hung in there at 12. The man has seen them come and go — Guttenberg, Chase, Jim Carrey, Bradley Cooper — but he has kept up with or outlasted them all.

The Cruise persists. And his co-stars from *Top Gun*, Edwards, Kelly McGillis and Meg Ryan, might now look older or different in the way that would be expected of normal human beings. But Tom is like a human action figure, and this is very largely because, 20 years ago, he shrewdly positioned himself as the star of what became an action franchise: the *Mission: Impossible* movies. Playing top agent Ethan Hunt, he takes on risky missions against shadowy bad guys, rides motorbikes, scales buildings, wears luxury watches, is lowered on wires into secure bank vaults to tap security codes into laptops, and free-climbs dangerous rocky outcrops. Cruise's late-career genius was to identify that, if franchises were the way Hollywood was going, then he would control and *be* the franchise, the key constituent element. *MI* has become loved — and Cruise has become almost an honorary national treasure in the UK, for →

the way he has committed to using British production facilities.

In December 2020, *The Sun* released a leaked audio tape of Cruise haranguing crewmembers on *Mission: Impossible 7* for breaking Covid rules. He yelled: "If I see you do it again, you're fucking GONE!" With anyone else, the optics of that would have been too awful. It could have been a cancellation moment: a rich Hollywood bully humiliating British workers? But, actually, there was sympathy for him. Everyone I spoke to shrugged and said he was under a lot of pressure. And Covid rules were important.

Tom Cruise has grown on us all. I loved him in *Magnolia*, with his detestation of the journalist who presumes to question him about his family background. I loved him in Michael Mann's thriller *Collateral*, where he played the (daringly) grey-haired killer being ferried around in the back of Jamie Foxx's cab. I can never see this film without thinking of Cruise's remarkable claim that, as a penniless wannabe actor in Manhattan in the early 1980s, he would persuade prostitutes to give him rides back through the Lincoln Tunnel to his family home in New Jersey. Which is to say — he would have had to persuade the prostitutes' clients, because they were the ones with the cars. I can imagine young Cruise riding in the back, with the sex worker and driver up front, these people having been cowed by the sheer force of his urgent, insecure personality: switching between the dazzling smile and the fierce look of determination: the monobrow, the jutting chin.

His life story is rather compelling: the father who abused the family. The mother who quietly woke Tom and his sisters at 4:30 in the morning when they were living in Ottawa, so that they could escape the violent paterfamilias and get over the border to the United States, where her family would effectively support them.

Then there was his hardworking, but fairly mediocre, academic career in high school (where he dreamed of being a pilot), which ended in him taking a role as Nathan Detroit in the school production of *Guys and Dolls*. A fellow student at the school happened to have a minor TV career, and her agent was in the audience — and he saw Tom's star potential.

Nathan Detroit! What fascinatingly atypical casting. Not Sky Masterson, the more obviously romantic lead, but Nathan Detroit, the hassled domesticated guy. I would have loved to see Cruise in that singing role. Surely we can revive *Guys and Dolls* on the London stage and persuade him to do it again?

There also is the matter of his controversial attachment to Scientology, to which he was introduced by his first wife, Mimi Rogers, in which he then, allegedly, tried (and failed) to immerse his second wife, Nicole Kidman, and whose adherents and creepy functionaries are said to have made his third wife, Katie Holmes, feel very uncomfortable. This, too, should have turned everyone against him, long ago. But, strangely, it hasn't. Partly, that is to do with it being a controversy of such long standing, predating social media by decades. Partly it is down to a secular-atheist view that Scientology is no sillier than any other faith, or that Cruise's attachment is a quaint eccentricity, like being a Mason. But it is also something else — people now know that, as a young and naive neophyte in the religion, Cruise submitted to intimate tape-recorded "auditing" sessions and, perhaps eager to demonstrate his humility and self-criticism, he may have admitted to various thoughts and feelings disapproved of both by Scientologists and his future red-blooded male fanbase in Reagan's America. Could it be that Scientologists and their peculiar leader, David Miscavige, have had a hold on their most famous recruit? Could it be that Tom Cruise's intense, charismatically coiled and clenched address to the camera is a 40-year hostage video?

I wonder. At any rate, when *Top Gun: Maverick* comes out, I shall be first in line to see the great man take to the skies once again and to marvel at his career-long defiance of gravity. ○

Eats

JAMBON-BEURRE

Charlie Teasdale

"WHAT IN THE EVERLIVING FUCK IS GOING ON?" asked one man. "Don't take this away from me!" pleaded another. A third threatened to throw himself into the Thames. The year was 2019. Pret a Manger, the not-actually-French chain of coffee shops, had recently discontinued its iconic (yes, iconic) jambon-beurre sandwich, and an especially middle-class corner of the Twittersphere had gone into meltdown.

The three-filling sandwich had long inspired a cult following of foodies and budget-lunchers alike. The saline, pillowy Wiltshire ham; butter so thick that you left dental records in every bite; bread (sorry, "losange") ideally shaped to gouge holes in the roof of your mouth. All punctuated by the zing and crunch of three noble cornichons, and for less than £3. Much to the joy of the JB acolytes — and, one assumes, to the relief of the Thames lifeboatmen — Pret blinked first in this cold-cut war and reinstated the sandwich less than two weeks after it was axed, claiming its disappearance was always intended to be a temporary measure. Order was, thankfully, restored.

The jambon-beurre, also known as *Le Parisien*, rose to prominence alongside the baguette itself towards the end of the 19th century and was allegedly popularised by the workers of Les Halles, the famous food market. It comprises a half-baguette, cut lengthways, spread with semi-salted butter (on both sides) and then filled with delicate frills of jambon-blanc. That's it.

Earlier this year, alone in Paris, I texted an epicurean friend: "Where do I get the best jambon-beurre in Paris?" "Chez Aline," he shot back, so off I went to the Rue de la Roquette in the 11th, just north-east of the Bastille.

Occupying the compact confines of a former horsemeat butcher — called "Chevaline", hence the new name — delicatessen-and-sandwich-shop Chez Aline consists of a kitchen, a counter and four chairs beside a narrow bar. It is tiny and chicly unfussy, and when I arrived around midday, a modest queue was already forming outside. Through the small window, I could see founder Delphine Zampetti at her station, filling sandwiches and plastic takeaway tubs from dishes under the counter. A self-taught cook, Zampetti opened Chez Aline a few years ago after itinerant work in Paris's food industry. One blogger has described it as a "jewel-box diorama of the low-key chef's ideal restaurant" and, peering in from the cold street, that seemed about right.

I repeated the appropriate French in my head and, when my time came, I entered the quiet shop. Thanks to the pandemic, it was a one-in-one-out situation, lending my time inside a confessional vibe. "I have been told of your sandwiches," I said to myself, "and I have travelled many miles to be here." Zampetti smiled, and though I was temporarily distracted by a big plate of *thon à l'escabèche* (pickled tuna) under the counter, I rallied. "*Deux sandwichs jambon-beurre, s'il vous plaît…*"

Zampetti sprang into action. Chez Aline's jambon-beurre consists of a classic jambon-blanc — "wet-brined for 24 hours in a mix of salt, sugar and a 'decoction' of spices, garlic and aromatics, then steam cooked, pressed and branded with the 'Jambon de Paris' stamp," a charcutier friend assures me — half a baguette from Parisian baker Maison Landemaine (chewy; crispy without and fluffy within) and a heart-stopping smear of salt-flecked butter from the Bornumbiac dairy in Normandy.

As Zampetti constructed her masterpiece, I asked for cornichons — because, Pret — and she smiled in a way that only Continental people do when a Brit is being culturally ignorant. "*Non*," she said, the electric ham-slicer whirring back and forth. Apparently, asking for pickles in your jambon-beurre is like asking for brown sauce in Tuscany. And, to be fair, the clue is in the title.

The sandwiches — plural, one for then and one for not-then — were €6.50 each and easily the best thing I have ever eaten in Paris; perhaps, even, the best thing I have ever eaten at all. The combination of ham, butter and baguette is a holy trinity and a primal truth. Like the concentric petals of a dahlia or the mating dance of the magnificent riflebird, there is no explanation to its perfection. It just is.

I scarfed down the first sarnie almost instantly, but managed to make the second last the remainder of my trip, nibbling away at it like a junkie every time I passed the minifridge in my hotel room. Its integrity waned, of course. The bread gradually toughened and the ham dried out at the edges, but it was still good. Freshness is temporary, but class is immortal.

I wasn't able to get back to Chez Aline before I left Paris a few days later, but when I alighted at St Pancras, I passed a Pret and noticed a man in the queue, holding a JB. He seemed spritely and optimistic, ready to tackle the afternoon with the kind of vigour only a good sandwich can muster. "You fool," I whispered, my eyes starting to mist at the memory. "You crazy, stupid fool." ○

Family history

CITY FOLK

Dipo Faloyin

MY FAMILY ARE CITY PEOPLE. I know this because my Great-Uncle Odeinde told me when I was seven years old.

"We are city folk," he said, as I watched him thumb through a photo album that was largely comprised of pictures of his younger self, in a three-piece suit with a flower-lapel pin, living his best, most fashionable life. At my regular visits to his home in Lagos, he would sit and remind me — and himself — of the experiences he had enjoyed travelling around major cities in Europe and across Africa.

But even if my great-uncle hadn't laid it out so clearly, our family's historic attraction to urban life wouldn't have passed me by. I have never known us to live anywhere else. We are a clan possessed by the existence of choice, which is largely what makes us City People. We are never more comfortable than when surrounded by swirling chaos and an unlimited abundance of abundant things. It is in this abundance of choice that we find peace.

The balance can be an uneasy one: a city promises you everything without ever truly revealing what it is you really want. There is too much to know and experience and feel and question to ever get your head around it fully. There is too much to believe in and at the same time there is nothing fixed to believe in at all. And yet, this is where my family absolutely thrives, comforted by the vast matrix of a complex bus network and the existence of a 24-hour-all-you-can-eat café round the corner, which we might never actually visit at 3am but know we could.

My mother believes in the wisdom of crowds: that they will always guide you to where you want to be. It is one of her most consistent virtues. In my mid-twenties, when I lived in New York, she flew out from Nigeria to visit me for a few days. I had moved there temporarily from London to try my hand at some freelance writing, but really it had been a dream to experience the city as a local and not as I had done on many family holidays: being dragged through cavernous department stores in Midtown. →

Sugarsheet.com

I had decided to live far away from the typical tourist traps of the city, in a relatively quiet neighbourhood in Brooklyn. My mother loved the apartment, and she was proud I was already on first-name terms with the guys running the bodega a block away. But I could tell something about the whole experience for her wasn't quite right. "You want to be staying near Times Square, don't you?" I finally asked. She smiled with both embarrassment and pride that I knew her so well. She missed the bright lights, she admitted, the crushing crowds, those department stores. "To me, that's New York," she said.

We soon found ourselves in Times Square, wading through dense masses as we had done as a family many times before in Europe, in central squares and piazzas bordered by the noise of impatient traffic, or through bustling market stalls greased by buyers and sellers trying to openly cheat each other. My mother glowed with happiness and relief.

My father is no different. At any particular moment, whether prompted or not, he is prepared to speak about his deep adoration for the London Underground system. Where the uninitiated might only see congestion and unreliability, he experiences a state of calm while riding through the subterranean labyrinth that brings him closer to all that there is above. It is a true gift for him.

Of all the urban landscapes we've loved before, the most city of all the cities is Lagos — Nigeria's unofficial capital, one of Africa's most populous, the world's blackest place, home to 21 million people unburdened by doubt. Lagos works exactly as the best cities should: by fundamentally not working in any coherent form but somehow still operating in a way that makes perfect sense to its inhabitants. It's where my parents met, and I grew up, amid a never-ending scream of car horns; a place largely governed by confidence rather than laws. When I was younger, my father would ask if I wanted to take a slow drive through the city: no destination in mind, just the opportunity to absorb its crackling currents and feel the jolt of life.

There is a place in our family for the countryside: generous, sleepy villages; vistas not tainted by high-rises and pollution. These have been my parents' favoured holiday destinations in recent years — places not defined by transience and where, as Rachel Cusk describes it in *Transit*, "people weren't forever having to explain themselves". Both my parents chose to spend their respective 60th birthdays in Devon, where we took quiet walks and had time to think. The connection and kindness they felt from a small congregation at the local church was a blessing that stayed with them.

But after a few days of fresh sea air, they started to fidget. We all started to fidget. It was a subconscious thing, brought on by a physiological response to going 72 hours without having someone aggressively brush past you and not apologise. It just wasn't us.

A favourite dinner-table conversation in our home is whether we could live somewhere like that full-time, away from the twists and tricks of a metropolis. Catch my father just after he has watched *Escape to the Country*, and he becomes passionately adamant that all he needs in this life is a single post office and a fence. My mum is more realistic — she knows her limitations, understands she comes alive when her existence is sound-tracked by the sweet hum of sirens.

I have now lived in London for a little over a decade. Recently, thanks to the housing crisis, moving out of it is a question I've been forced to consider more seriously. Many of my friends are leaving the city, chasing the fanciful concept of "having a garden". Could I defy one of the foundational tenets of my family and do it, too?

Whenever I contemplate it, I think of what my Great-Uncle Odeinde would say if he was still with us. I imagine him surveying my half-acre rural empire, a glazed look washing over his face as I brag about the commute time into Waterloo. I picture him turning to me and placing an arm on my shoulder, as he always used to do, before reminding me, kindly but firmly, of exactly who we are. ○

Affairs of the heart

ROGERING

Alex Bilmes

CAN THERE BE A MORE IRRITATING WORD IN WORLD SPORT THAN "ROGER", specifically as it is applied to the dreamy stud-muffin of SW19? Do you know, I'm not certain there can. Not even "Lewis", for motor-racing's adorable, chin-strapped gas-guzzler. Or "Pep", for the dishy daddy of *Sky Sports' Super Sunday*.

Make no mistake: those endearments are exceptionally annoying, too. But, like a double foot-fault deep into the fifth set, something about the promiscuous use of "Roger" really stinks the place out. There's the maddening presumption, of course. And the icky overfamiliarity. But most pungent of all the malodours emanating from "Roger" is the whiff of middle-aged man-musk. It's quite the bouquet.

For yours truly, and also fragrantly, the murky sense-memory most immediately conjured by the indiscriminate employment of the Christian name of the fanciable finger-blower is the Ralgex reek of the gents' locker room. That safe space where bloody good blokes roll their feelings up with their socks and stuff them inside their sneakers, all the while nurturing feverish schoolboy fantasies of stolen moments with the shapely captain of the Firsts. (Mine was called Jason.)

But perhaps I'm overegging it — wouldn't be the first time — and my problem with this whole "Roger" thing is simply that his is such an unromantic name for such a dashing figure. I mean, isn't the bathos just unbearable? "Roger" is an affirmative muttered by security guards and children pretending to be spies, sticky fingers pressed to imaginary earpieces. Or, it's an antediluvian euphemism for sex, possibly still used by death-breathed snug-bar smoothies, reminiscing about ancient conquests from beneath their hair transplants. (Roger's also the dog in a poem by Ted Hughes: "*He's just a sack of snoring dog. / You can lug him like a log.*") "Roger" really ought not be the name we use to refer to such a stunning exemplar of masculine style and grace, even

Alamy

an old-timey variety of it: rich, white, cisgender… cardigan-wearing.

And yet, we all use it when speaking of the sexy Slammer, though next to none of us has any claim on him beyond the fact we've seen him on the telly. It's the same with "Rafa", for Roger's hench nemesis. Until Melbourne, "Novak", too, gloried in the status of mononym. Now *Private Eye* insists on "Novax Djokovid" for the swivel-eyed Serb, and really he has only himself to blame. Our Andy? No, he'll always be Andy Murray. The spiky baseliner doesn't invite intimacy, even of the imaginary kind. More power to his (doubtless injured) elbow.

But Roger and Rafa, those glistening show-court himbos, they'll always be on first-name terms with the world. Like Elvis, and Jesus. And — somebody please throttle me with a sweaty headband — Boris.

This is, I think, a relatively recent development. Laver, Rosewall, Năstase, Borg, McEnroe, Connors, Lendl, Edberg, Sampras, Agassi. We can summon their first names, naturally we can, but if I said "Ken", or "John", or "Pete", in isolation, you'd have no clue who I'm on about. Perhaps the other Boris (Boris I), the tennis player, was the rule-proving exception. Perhaps that was because, like Boris Johnson (Boris II), Boris Becker was a martyr to his pecker, made a farce of his private life and his public life, and as a result is regarded as a Total Lad. (Both Bonking Borises — Boris I and Boris II — would have made excellent Rogers.)

Who is responsible for this mess? We could blame the pundits (Tim, Greg, Martina), invariably retired players who, presumably, really are on first-name terms with the current stars of the game. Equally, we could point to a more general relaxation of formalities, as society goes sports-casual and authority figures seek to telegraph their supposed common touches — they wish! — by insisting on Tony or Dave or Sadiq. (It is, →

you may have noticed, the more sincere and — blush! — *authentic* politicians who, for all their faults, we continue to call by their full names: no one, possibly not even Mr May, refers to Mrs May as "Theresa".)

But I think it's something deeper, and weirder, and particularly male, that prompts all this uncomfortable Rogering. We know the soft-handed Swiss is catnip to glamorous women, as Anna Wintour and countless others will confirm. But I fear he means more, incalculably more, to a certain kind of chap. One who needs someone — preferably another man — to exalt, to rhapsodise, and, yes, to fancy a little bit.

We needn't limit ourselves to tennis; the Rogerers don't. Remember the Formula One supremo forever known as "Bernie"? Why generations of boot-cut-jeans wearers (Jeremys?) should want so badly to be besties with an inch-high tax avoider is another of those mysteries that, like a Jimmy Carr joke, one would rather not have explained. Bernie, one suspects, is the type of man who keeps his VIP lanyard round his neck during coitus, lest his partner should doubt his special status. Perhaps it's worth remembering that, during World War II and for years afterwards, we Brits knew Stalin as "Uncle Joe".

Now, football has taken the stomach-turning hero-worship to a new extreme. While I genuflect to no one in my admiration for Man City's master tactician, don't you think we might be taking things a smidge too far with the obsessive "Pep this" and "Pep that" and "Pep the other"? When we're not marvelling about Pep's use of a false nine, we're swooning over Pep's fetching knitwear, fawning on Pep's rugged salt'n'pepper stubble, Pep's remarkable multilingual proficiency, Pep's brooding touchline intensity. In England, there is a cult of the foreign football manager so slavering that it makes the Roger stans look like amateurs.

Where did it start? Not with Pep. First came Arsène. The austere Alsatian, who managed Arsenal for roughly two centuries in football-manager years, set the template for sophisticated (eats in restaurants with tablecloths), cultured (reads books without pictures) foreign managers to come. It was on Arsène — *Le Professeur* — that we rehearsed the craven grovelling that has achieved its full potential with Pep. He was, it was agreed, pure class, applauded for the artistry of his teams and the science of his approach. No wonder Sir Alex (who had to settle for "Fergie") turned such an angry shade of rouge in his presence.

After Arsène, *le deluge*. Most famously Sven, the sexually incontinent Swede, and José, the swaggering silver fox, with his stadium-sized hubris. And now we have a mortification of Eurobosses to crush on: gegenpressing Teuton technocrats; glowering *carabinieri* imported from Serie A. Handsome, urbane, fluent in a bedazzlement of tongues including both the language of sign (technical-area dialect) and, no doubt, the lingo of lurve, even the more minor members of this gilded gang — the Mini Pep at Arsenal, Southampton's Klopp clone — are treated with a cringing reverence, by press and public alike. For a time, I believed this was simply because, with their cashmere V-necks and their luxury-watch endorsements, they are unimaginably exotic compared to the lumpen dolts who once patrolled English touchlines. (Fun fact: no homegrown manager has ever won the Premier League.) And maybe that was all it was, for a time.

But the reverence has turned to idolatry, and the super-managers' thoughts are solicited, and received with worshipful respect, on all the issues of the day: not just the necessity of playing out from the back, but the government's response to Covid, and how to stop racism, and improve the nation's mental health, and end the culture wars, and address the climate emergency, and if any one of them was ever moved to tell us what to watch on Netflix we'd probably fall to our knees, weeping with gratitude.

We needn't get bogged down in the dreary sociology behind this phenomenon — family breakdown; discrediting of political classes; absence of leadership; death of God — but should we not question the wisdom of putting quite so much faith in men whose chief qualification for sainthood seems to be the ability to conduct multiple daily press conferences without ever saying anything memorable — and, in some cases, anything intelligible? That, and the fact they didn't grow up in Britain?

As with Roger and Rafa, it's that last bit, the foreign bit, that seems to be curiously significant; indeed, the determining factor. After all, Eddie Howe doesn't get this kind of treatment. No one cares what Brendan Rodgers thinks about the crisis in the Met. David Moyes can only dream of being asked his opinion on the social-media habits of Gen Z. Graham Potter on Ukraine? Do us a lemon.

As for Gerrard and Lampard (Stevie G and Lamps, as it were), the managers of Aston Villa and Everton — as *Esquire* goes to press — may be lavishly decorated former Premier League poster boys, but no one gives the faintest toss what they think about matters of state.

(An anomaly: Roy Hodgson, who can't pronounce his "r"s, is routinely referred to as "Roy", and not just for fun. His counsel is also sought on topics far beyond football. I blame his years managing abroad, as well as his pathetically well-documented interest in literary fiction. Honestly, anyone would think the man was foreign.)

How far will all this go? Could Roger end up as President of Europe? Will the Queen feel moved to alter the line of succession so that, rather than Charles, a silky continental can be monarch? Are we ready for King Pep?

Puzzling over this important topic the other day, I decided that, after all, perhaps all this bowing and scraping around Roger, Pep and co is not so shameful. Previously, the British tradition involved promoting violently inarticulate young men with moronic training-ground nicknames to senior role-model positions. Having endured years of Chopper and Psycho, Gazza and Wazza, perhaps we're better off with our cute little pashes on Pep.

A final observation: When mulleted Spurs heroes Hoddle and Waddle launched their fleck-trousered assault on the pop charts in the spring of 1987, the leggy duo's record-label bosses decided to go with first names only for their new act, and so "Diamond Lights" (peak position #12) was credited to Glenn & Chris, as they would never have been called while playing football. Sadly, though perhaps not unjustly, a follow-up failed to chart. ○

Dating

A BEDTIME TORY

Murray Clark

ON AN UNUSUALLY MILD WINTER EVENING, having swiped through five separate apps, each of which promised to deliver The One, I arranged a pub date with a man who had not marketed himself to prospective shags with a selfie from the left-hand side of the aeroplane, so I thought, why not? The bar had been set low of late. As we exchanged bubbles of carefully curated text,

he asked where I lived. I told him. He lived in the same area. Oh, right by the pub with the bulldog of a man who openly sells cocaine at the bar? Yeah, right by there! Just around the corner.

I was the first to arrive, as usual, not at the pub with the open-air drugs sales that I go to with my housemates, but the nicer one across the road. It was warm enough to sit outdoors, which I prefer to do anyway, deploying the traditional pairing of cheap lager and tobacco to get me through the beige pleasantries of what is referred to, amongst jaded singles, as "dead chat".

Five minutes later, a bright-eyed, handsome man walked in. His dark brown hair was neat, and he took off his beanie in greeting. I got to my feet and extended a hand. He swerved it entirely and gave me a hug, greeting me with an accent firmly planted in the western counties. I thought that was a nice thing to do.

We talked about small things. The unnecessarily high stock-levels of panko breadcrumbs in the local Tesco Express. How he turned vegetarian after eating at a kebab shop that was shut down for using bin meat. How I'd been gutting my pay packet at Whole Foods, in vain hopes of saving the planet.

But Bezos, he replied.

Look, I can only fight so many battles of late capitalism, I said.

He laughed and said: We're all losing.

I told him that I write about silly shirts for a living. He asked if I wore a suit to work. He pronounced it "syoot", like someone's posh grandma who isn't called grandma at all, but something absurd like Bunty. He said he worked as a political lobbyist for "fintech", and I didn't really know what that meant so I focused on the former.

Lobbying is a slippery slope, I said.

Not really, he said. It's the credit-card companies that cripple working people.

I told him about my brief unpaid stint as a parliamentary lackey for a Labour backbencher, before the silly shirts came calling.

Parliament shouldn't be influenced by big business, I said. MPs are elected by people who don't have the money for a lanyard at Davos.

He laughed again, and I felt quite pleased with myself.

We drank more pints. Our knees knocked under the table. His index finger circled the palm of my hand. He said he didn't smoke, and yet he took one of my cigarettes when I offered. I lit it, and his hands rested on mine as he protected the ember from the non-existent wind. Later, we exchanged a nervous kiss. People can still stare at two men in such a tête-à-tête, so I pulled away. There was a moment of silence as we grinned at one another.

I worked in parliament, too, he said.

Oh! Who for? I asked, expecting the name of a centrist Labour MP ejected into deep space under the Corbyn years.

A Conservative, he said.

I gawped at him, half smiling, in disbelief, like every other emotionally inept man who laughs in shock at grave news.

To be a young(ish), provincial-born gay Londoner, and not only lend your vote to Boris Johnson, who called us "tank-topped bum boys", but to be a worker bee in his hive? It astounded me. On dates, with friends, among colleagues, I'd taken it for granted that we all saw the Dark Mark hanging above the Conservatives. We didn't need to proclaim our political affiliations, because Thatcher's Section 28 did that for us. Lamenting the State of Everything under 12 years of Conservative rule was, for the people I spent time with, not just a given but a hobby. It had been this way ever since 2016, when the United Kingdom revolted against the capital and when right-wing untruths landed a reality TV star in the White House.

It was hard to remember the time before, when a secret ballot really was secret, and how you voted didn't seem to matter all that much. My mum is liberal-lite. My dad is a 1980s Thatcherite who thanked the Iron Lady for his mortgage. Their beliefs, though at odds, never came to a head when I was a kid. My childhood wasn't peppered with discussions about unions, or Iraq, or Major's moral hypocrisy. In fact, politics was not to be discussed at all (and neither was religion, my family being thankfully and proudly godless).

Maybe we should avoid the politics, he said.

And yet here, right here, was a sounding board, and a good-looking one. Why not talk about Owen Paterson's odd jobs, and the dodgy Covid contracts, and the parties and the parties and the parties, and Carrie Antoinette? And even after all this, after all we'd just lived through, he was still a Tory?

Yes, he said calmly. Yes, I am. I felt my own face redden. I was trying to poke the bear, only to discover it was a smiling manatee. I wanted some fire and brimstone. I wanted him, like the treacherous MP for Bury South, to cross the aisle, or to point at me in fury and tell me that he had "delivered Brexit". He politely did neither of these things. So, we got another pint and talked about books instead.

I was confused. This was a person I could probably never take to dinner parties, or house parties, or introduce to my housemates around our favourite table in our favourite pub (yes, the one with the bar-bound coke dealer, and no, not our favourite because of him) where we'd laugh and rage together about Boris Johnson and Priti Patel and Michael Gove. And yet, we seemed to like one another, and the conversation was lively, and his hand still met my palm, and this was, to all intents and purposes, a good date.

He left early the next morning, and I didn't suggest breakfast. At the door, he said that we might see one another soon, and I gave a full-throated "yeah, definitely" despite the fact that we both knew this would probably never happen. After all, what had we really achieved? Had I learned that Tories don't all point and laugh at poor people from their golden carriages on the way to Chequers? Did he no longer think that all lily-livered liberals ride around in hybrid vehicles powered by homegrown quince from the allotment? Maybe. Though it was more likely that I was never in contention to be his plus-one at dinner parties either.

For almost four decades, political opposition hadn't kneecapped my parents' marriage. It hadn't even entered it. Perhaps we could be like them. They speak on the phone several times throughout the day, and they eat together every single night, and they laugh with and at one another a lot. But for a time, they didn't. As I mourned the results of that horrible referendum with one parent over the phone, the other was remarkably silent. They had bristled with rage at each other, apparently. These differences had barely mattered once upon a time. Now, even my parents had taken to the barricades. Along with everyone else.

Maybe, I thought later, there was something poetic here. Like Beatrice and Dante, or Michelangelo and his handsome paramour Tommaso dei Cavalieri, or those patron saints of ill-fated love, Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah in *Splash*.

Would he turn to me and give me a last, longing look as he disappeared back into the Tory swamp? Would I dive in after him, and either grow gills (surely there are a few Tories out there with gills) or drown trying? It had been a good date. I just wasn't prepared to swim for it.

My housemate asked how it went. Well, I think. Slightly weird. Got on. Spent a lot of time together. Laughed a lot. He once worked for a Tory MP. My housemate winced in disgust. I shrugged and looked at my phone. You can kiss a Tory. But, perhaps, not kiss a Tory and tell. ○

Esquire

The Big Watch Survey

Win £5,000

to spend on a watch of your choice from

GOLDSMITHS Mappin & Webb WATCHES of SWITZERLAND

Take part now*

bit.ly/watches2022

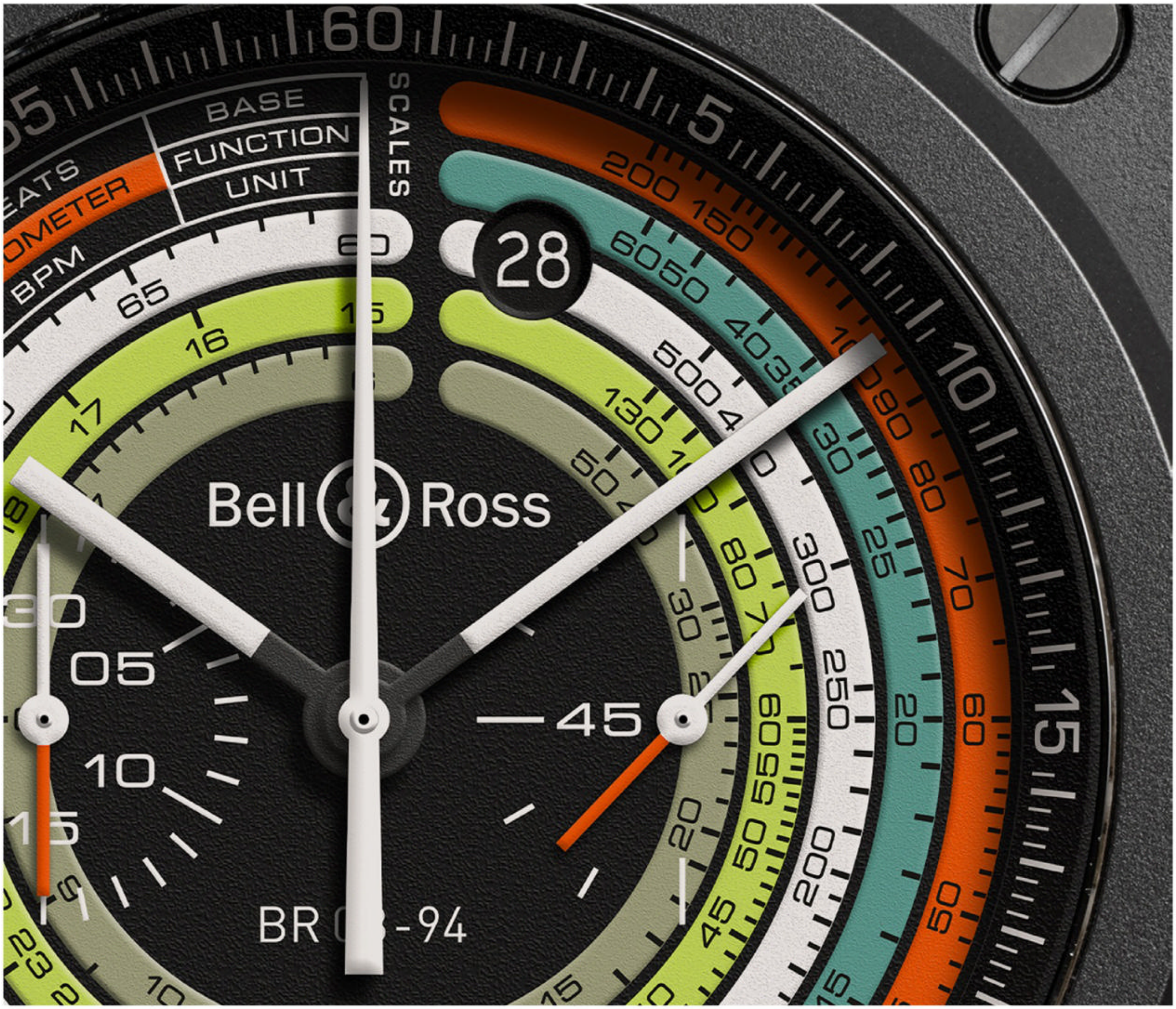
Ana Cuba. *Terms and conditions apply; visit the website for details. Goldsmiths, Mappin & Webb and Watches of Switzerland are part of the Watches of Switzerland Group

The Watch Report

22 timepieces to wear in 2022

Edited by Johnny Davis Photographs by David Newton

Esquire



Show your true colours

This summer, wear a rainbow on your wrist

Given the sheer number of watches released each year, it's not hard for the aspiring trend-hunter to find themes among them. From 2022's models, one could make the case for square watches (Hublot, Cartier). For gold watches (Vacheron Constantin, Chopard). For watches with a GMT function (Tudor, Longines). For watches experimenting with cutting-edge materials (Breguet, H Moser & Cie). Or, for watches reviving themselves from their own archives (Zenith, Cartier again). One theme that generates column inches is colour. In 2020, it was blue dials. In 2021, they were green. On the one hand, this is faintly ridiculous — how many people splurge on a luxury watch because its colour is "in"? On the other hand, trends come from somewhere. (It's likely your dad had a different taste in watches to you.) This year, we've reached the point where one thing we can say about colour and watches is this: anything goes. From ice-blue models (Grand Seiko, Rolex) to mint-green (Breitling), high-end watchmaking is basking in the spectrum like never before. The days of monochrome men's watches — black for sport; white for dress — seem a long time ago. Your dad wouldn't necessarily approve. Which is surely the point?

Above: Bell & Ross's 03-94 Multimeter watch, limited to 500 pieces, showcases this season's hottest trend with its sophisticated multicoloured dial

Clash of the titaniums

Big brands make the case for one tough material

As strong as steel but less than half its weight, dent- and corrosion-proof titanium is used in bike frames, tennis rackets and other high-performance products. Luxury watches, less commonly. But its popularity is on the up: in 2020, Tag Heuer launched its Aquaracer Bamford edition in titanium. Last year, Rolex tested a pre-production Yacht-Master in titanium. And in 2022, A Lange & Söhne's Odysseus, Oris's ProPilot X and Seiko's Spring Drive 5 Days Diver have all appeared in the metal. Hublot's new family of watches, the Square Bang Unico, also comes in a titanium option (pictured). As fans of luxury have known for years, sometimes it's better to whisper than to shout.

Paris match

Why Hermès's time is now

Hermès is a huge name in luxury goods, but in the world of Swiss watchmaking, it's a newbie. However, sales in its watch division were up a whopping 72 per cent in 2021, making it one of the fastest-growing brands in the business. Its appeal is of a piece with its playfully luxe Parisian style. Take the Heure H, with its face that's a square inside a rectangle. Or the Carré H, a circle inside a square, its dial referencing a compass and a pendulum. Or, most recently, the bestselling H08, a cushion-shaped model with offbeat typography and a smoothed-down octagon case, which has just been launched in blue. Sometimes success comes in setting your own path.

Flying high

Modern tech meets mid-century design in the new Patek watch

The standout watch from Patek Philippe for 2022 is a remarkable feat of engineering. Patek is well known for its "travel time" complication, something it came up with in the 1950s, and its annual calendar complication from the 1990s.

Now, its new reference 5326G-001 has combined the two. The Annual Calendar Travel Time is a watch that displays the day, date and month, and only requires that once-a-year adjustment. (It's a feat of technical wizardry that required eight patents.) It also dispenses with those side pushers, since everything is controlled via the crown. That makes it look simpler and nicer — but then everything about the Annual Calendar Travel Time looks nice.

The charcoal grey, textured dial is meant to evoke camera cases from the mid-century, and the white-gold case is surrounded by a hobnail pattern in guilloche. The Arabic numerals and hands, also white gold, have a beige luminescent coating, adding to the modern look. *£59,200; patek.com*

Virginie Khateeb

Purple patch

Two tasteful new dial tones from Nomos Glashütte

Already the market leader for impossibly charming watches at improbably low prices, Nomos Glashütte has just released its brilliant Club Campus in two new colourways. Alongside the existing “absolute grey” and “future orange”, it is now available in “deep pink” and “blue purple”, with the latter being especially slick. The polished steel bezel and California dial are elegant against the inky shade, while the neon orange accents glow that bit warmer. £1,000; *nomos-glashuette.com*

Turtle power!

Deep thinking from Certina

Certina’s special-edition DS Super PH500M has been given something of a vintage makeover for its 2022 iteration. First launched in 2017, the watch is a result of the brand’s partnership with the Sea Turtle Conservancy that sees proceeds from each one sold donated to the non-profit organisation. Echoing a DS Super from 1968 — proof of Certina’s aquatic heritage — the 43mm watch is realised in azure blue with a sunray finish on the face and orange indices, but its inner workings are bang up to date. Crucially, this dive watch is designed to be worn and used, and will keep ticking at depths of up to 500m. So, if doing your bit to save the turtles inspires you further, you could always swim with them, too. *£825; certina.com*

Current trends

Meet a new team of divers hitting even greater depths

Truthfully, the dive watch never really goes out of style, but at the Watches & Wonders fair in Geneva this year, there was a distinct glut of especially cool, especially hardy models. Unsurprisingly, Tudor was one of the brands of note. There was much buzz around the Black Bay Pro, a 29mm dive watch — it is incredibly handsome, and a snip, starting at £2,840. Then, at Rolex, the Deepsea had been very slightly tweaked to make it a little easier on the eye, be it on land or 3km below sea level. The bezel has been slimmed-down, while the date window has been enlargened by a very specific eight per cent. Marginal gains, but fear not, Rolex’s most serious diver sustains.

At Panerai, the dive-watch specialist has lasered in on the potential for sustainability and conscious production with the Submersible QuarantaQuattro eSteel, which features 72g of recycled material, accounting for 52 per cent of the total weight. Finally, there is Tag Heuer’s more extreme and robust Aquaracer Professional 1000 Superdiver (pictured). This model features a more substantial crown guard, as well as new, arrow-shaped hands, and the “SLN Grade X1” lume, the highest grade of Super-Luminova.

Love-eight relationship

Bulgari releases another record-breaking Octo

In the 10 years since Bulgari launched its Octo collection, the marque has achieved eight world records, including the world's thinnest tourbillon (2014) and world's thinnest minute-repeater (2016). The latest in the line may not be as complicated, but it is staggering nonetheless. At 1.8mm — including the sandblasted titanium case, not just the movement — the Octo Finissimo Ultra is the thinnest mechanical watch ever made.

Wind-up merchants

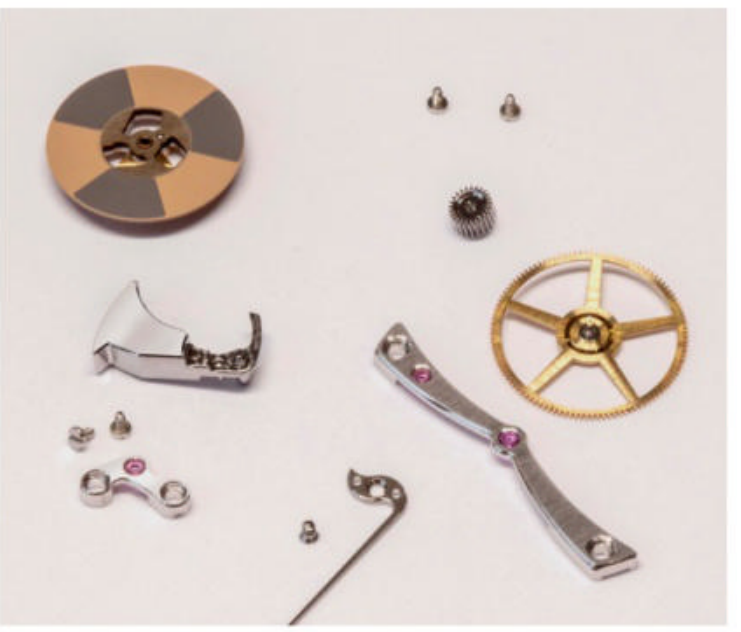
Wolf's worthy home for watches

The don of clever automatic winding boxes are Wolf 1834, the British family-run company now in its fifth generation. As its name suggests, Wolf has history on its side, being established when William IV was on the throne. Its latest marvel is British Racing, a 34cm x 20cm x 25cm box; its details evoking the sleek and smart design of 1900s sports cars. Handmade, with a distinctive quad-angled panelled lid, British Racing comes with gold and gun-metal accents, and is big enough for two winding modules, with storage space for two more watches. It's a beautiful piece of kit — as is only right. As CEO and creative director Simon Wolf tells *Esquire*: "You wouldn't put a Picasso in a clip frame. And you wouldn't keep your Patek in your sock drawer." *£1,139; wolf1834.com*

Chime of their lives

Chopard sounds out the experts for its minute-repeaters

Of all the complications a watch can feature, the minute-repeater is perhaps the most beguiling. It means the watch can audibly chime out the time via tiny bells inside the movement, but it's an on-demand function, so rather than just sound-off every hour, the timepiece is so designed to only make a sound when requested. Impressive, considering there are just cogs and levers within. Chopard introduced its first minute-repeater in 2016 — the LUC Full Strike — a watch that was almost two years in development. This year, the maison has unveiled three new minute-repeaters. For these, Chopard co-president Karl-Friedrich Scheufele enlisted the expertise of virtuoso cellist Gautier Capuçon and violinist Renaud Capuçon to fine-tune the models' chimes. *chopard.com*



Ball
Roadmaster Rescue Chronograph Limited Edition

Ball's Roadmaster Rescue Chronograph is a serious bit of kit. Purpose-built for all sorts of rescue operations (be that land, air, sea, or counting down until your Uber rightly cancels your ride), the blue diver's chronograph works in tandem with a pulsometer scale that measures your heart rate. Now you've just got to work on your timekeeping. *£2,120; ballwatch.com*

Bell & Ross
BR 05 Skeleton Green

Rubber stamping the trend for green watches, Bell & Ross's BR 05 Skeleton has been cast in a dusty shade of olive as part of the brand's 2022 offering. A hardy 40mm case (with a 10.33mm thickness), screw-down crown and crown-guard betray the BR 05's toughness, but as the openwork face attests, it has elegance and artistry within. Limited to just 500 pieces. *£5,900; bellross.com*

Blancpain
Fifty Fathoms Bathyscaphe

It’s hard to imagine taking something so elegant to such terrifying depths, but there’s no question Blancpain’s Bathyscaphe could handle it. A sleeker take on the original Fifty Fathoms — first introduced in 1953 — it’s water-resistant to 300m, living up to its namesake, the submersible invented by Swiss explorer Auguste Piccard. *£9,600; blancpain.com*

Breitling
Navitimer B01 Chronograph

Breitling's multivarious iterations of the Navitimer have proven wildly popular in the past few years, and 2022 has seen another cache of the iconic pilot's watch unveiled. The new Navitimer is available in 41mm, 43mm and 46mm, as well as steel or 18k red-gold finishes — and with a number of dial colourways. Variety is the name of the game. *£6,850; breitling.com*

Bremont
Argonaut Bronze

Though Britain saw much of its watchmaking industry move abroad after WWII, Bremont is at the forefront of the modern revival. It keeps things British with the Argonaut Bronze: a watch that salutes the Armed Forces from the caseback, which features the heraldic badges of each military arm, down to the material, with bronze long considered a “marine metal”. *£3,195; bremont.com*

Cartier
Pasha de Cartier

Cartier isn't wanting for iconic watch designs, its Tank, Santos and Drive de Cartier being three. In 2020, it revamped another distinctive model, one that was launched in 1985 and discontinued a decade later. With its unconventional case, Art Deco numerals (just the four) and crown-guard attached by a chain, the Pasha de Cartier could hardly be made by anyone else. *£6,100; cartier.com*

Gucci
25H

Twenty-first century Gucci is a maximalist affair. Alongside the pussy-bow shirts and powder-pop furs, creative director Alessandro Michele is an enthusiast of everything from cushions to crockery. Also watches. Gucci now has hundreds of intriguing designs on offer, and its 25H is a rigorously executed sports model that's earned the brand serious cred in high-watchmaking. *£1,250; gucci.com*

Hublot
Classic Fusion Chronograph Yellow Gold

After more than 40 years, Hublot's groundbreaking pairing of yellow gold and black rubber still feels ahead of its time. (In fact, there's been an upsurge of interest in yellow-gold watches in 2022.) This new model has a slimmer 42mm case. Along with the muted matte-black dial, it makes for a restrained, classic timepiece — and yet another winner from Hublot. *£23,400; hublot.com*

Jaeger-LeCoultre
Master Control Calendar

For a brand founded almost 200 years ago, a 30th birthday may seem like nothing to Jaeger-LeCoultre. And yet, three decades after the launch of the Master Control, Jaeger-LeCoultre has fine-tuned and released a brand new model. This time, it's a blue-on-blue piece that's as classic as it gets. Happy birthday to you, Jaeger-LeCoultre (and happy days to us). *£10,800; jaeger-lecoultre.com*

Omega Speedmaster '57

Inspired by the original Speedmaster — can you guess the year? — that was part of all six lunar missions, the '57 is housed in a compact 40.5mm steel case. Its blue dial features rhodium-plated markers and the Co-Axial Master Chronometer Calibre 9906 movement is master-chronometer certified, the Swiss industry's highest standard of precision. *£7,450; omegawatches.com*

Oris
ProPilot X Calibre 400

Oris joins the colour party with its ProPilot X, now available in fetching salmon-y red and coral-y blue dials, as well as grey. The case is sandblasted and satinised titanium; the design simple and elegant. The Calibre 400 part refers to Oris's newest, most accurate movement, one already rolled out across three other lines. Great value for money, Oris goes from strength to strength. *£3,300; oris.ch*

Panerai
Luminor Chrono Flyback Ceramica

The Swiss-Italian dons of beefy dive watches have been making strides in sustainability recently, working with recycled steel and plant-based components. It has always embraced different materials — and Panerai has technical chops, too. This new model developed especially for “marine exploits” has a scratch-resistant ceramic case and a DLC-coated buckle. *£13,900; panerai.com*

Piaget
Polo Skeleton

A juxtaposition of astonishing engineering and elegant design, this new iteration of Piaget's Polo, first unveiled in the 1970s, sees the soft sweep of the rose-gold case cocoon the skeletonised dial within. The ultrathin (just 2.4mm) in-house movement is finished with Piaget blue (naturally), while the alligator-leather strap can be swapped out (but why would you?). *£36,800; piaget.com*

SHANGHAI | BRISBANE | NOUMEA | FIJI | MIDWAY | HONOLULU | L.ANGELES | DENVER | MEXICO C | NEW-YORK | CARACAS | B AIRES | AZORES | KING E PT | LONDON | GENEVA | CAIRO | BAGHDAD | MAURITIUS
BANGKOK | TOKYO
RADO
Over-Pole
13
SWISS MADE

Rado
Captain Cook High-Tech Ceramic Diver

One of the best bang-for-your-buck watches on the market, Rado's new Captain Cook realised the brand's brilliant diver in a 43mm ceramic case, which protects the in-house movement and sapphire and crystal face within. The ceramic is supremely scratch-resistant, and the movement offers an impressive 80-hour power reserve. Truly, a lot of watch for your money. *£3,255; rado.com*

Richard Mille
RM 67-02

Designed for South African sprinter Wayde van Niekerk — the Olympic champion and world-record holder for the 300 and 400 metres — the RM 67-02 in yellow and green is engineered to handle the rigours of track-and-field sport. Its slightness belies its complexity: simply peer through the openwork face or crystal caseback to see the majesty within. *£119,800; richardmille.com*

Rolex Submariner Date

We could use 60-odd words to tell you that the latest generation of this dive watch stays true to its 1953 original. We could point out its royal blue dial, for legibility underwater. Highlight the brand's proprietary gold and steel mix. Or mention the bracelet, designed to fit over a wetsuit as well as look awesome. Or we could just sell it in four. It's a Rolex Submariner. *£11,800; rolex.com*

Seiko
SPB281J1 King Seiko

There’s a reason the SPB281J1 is called the King Seiko. And, so proud it is of this crown that it even has those very words stamped across the dial. It’s classic, it’s modern and it’s emblematic of everything Seiko stands for: fine-tuned simplicity at a relatively accessible price. For an absolute monarch, the King Seiko is quite the democrat. *£1,470; seikoboutique.co.uk*

Tag Heuer
Autavia 60th Anniversary Flyback Chronograph

Now in its 60th year, the Autavia might not be the best-known Tag Heuer, but it might well be its handsomest watch. A collector's favourite, the Autavia was semi-rereleased in 2017, but this latest launch offers three different models: two new chronographs and a three-hand GMT. Pictured here is the flyback chronograph with a silver and black "panda" dial. *£5,250; tagheuer.com*

Tissot
Seastar 2000 Professional Powermatic 80

Tissot's tough. So, when the Swiss marque makes a watch that's built for deep, blue seas and hard grey mountains, you know it'll actually survive such climes. True to form, the Seastar 2000 is no show pony. This tool watch is made from reinforced stainless steel, and even the balance spring inside is coated with a titanium-based alloy to ensure ultimate precision. *£895; tissotwatches.com*

Tudor
Black Bay Fifty-Eight Bronze

Bronze has long been associated with diving, so it makes sense for Tudor's dive watch to appear in the alloy. And it hasn't gone about it half-cocked. The bronze case has a bronze-coloured caseback. The dial is bronze-coloured. The bracelet is full-on bronze. Tudor will supply a fabric strap — in "brown bronze". A statement piece that'll never take third place. *£4,030; tudorwatch.com*

Vacheron Constantin Fiftysix Tourbillon

The Fiftysix line was introduced to bring in younger customers, mixing Vacheron's venerable reputation with a simpler, more modern feel. Adding a tourbillon complication at 6 o'clock might seem at odds with that, but it shows versatility. Plus, when you're dealing with an 18k pink-gold watch costing in excess of £100,000, simplicity is all relative. *Price on request; vacheron-constantin.com*

Victorinox
INOX Professional Diver Titanium Limited Edition

Sounds like a Marvel spin-off — and could probably costume a Marvel spin-off too — Victorinox's INOX is the sort of watch that refreshingly leans into its functionality. It's here to be a lightweight, robust diver's piece that can navigate all sorts of subaqueous treachery — and it isn't afraid to look like that sort of watch, either. *£1,159; victorinox.com*

Esquire

Words by Murray Clark, Johnny Davis and Charlie Teasdale

Esquire

SUBSCRIBE TO ESQUIRE — ONLY £19.99 FOR A YEAR

SUMMER 2022
£6
Esquire
ELVIS LIVES! MICK BROWN ON THE RETURN OF THE KING / SUNGLASSES / REWILDING / ANDREW O'HAGAN MEETS THE QUEEN / WE ♥ THE 90S SWEATSHIRTS / CAMERAS / BRITAIN'S MOST INFLUENTIAL ARTIST / WATCHES / LOTUS GOES BIG / TOM CRUISE AT 60 / ROGER, RAFA AND PEP THE BEST HAM SANDWICH IN THE WORLD / A BOY AT WAR / DANNY BOYLE ON THE SEX PISTOLS / FICTION BY GILES FODEN / LAGER, LAGER, LAGER

SPRING 2022
£6
Esquire
CILLIAN MURPHY'S SOFT POWER / MENSWEAR GOES DARK / MATT REEVES TAKES ON BATMAN / TABITHA LASLEY'S FAVOURITE MURDER / FUTURE PREP ANDREW O'HAGAN AT THE SEASIDE / THE ARCHITECTURE OF FOOTBALL / BEN WHISHAW WILL SEE YOU NOW / CALEB AZUMAH NELSON ON TOUR GEORGIA PRITCHETT: OJ STOLE MY MINIBREAK / WARHOL VERSUS BASQUIAT / ED CAESAR MEETS CARL COX / FICTION BY WILL SELF / BISCUITS, AGAIN

ONLY £19.99 for four issues of *Esquire*

SAVE 16 per cent on the cover price

FREE delivery, direct to your door

To subscribe, visit:

hearstmagazines.co.uk/eq-magazine

or call **01858 438 770** and quote offer code **1EQ11922**

Offer valid for new UK subscriptions by Direct Debit. After your first year, your subscription will continue at £19.99 a year unless you are notified otherwise. The standard subscription price is £24 for four issues of ESQUIRE, based on the standard cover price of £6. Subscriptions may not include promotional items packaged with the magazine. All orders will be acknowledged and you will be advised of the start issue within 14 days. Subscriptions may be cancelled by providing 28 days' notice. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other subscription offer and closes on 31 December 2022. For UK subscription enquiries, please call 01858 438 770. All information is correct at time of going to press. For our data policy, visit hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice.

Elvis Presley, aged 22, in Dallas, Texas, 1957

ELVIS *in* EXCELSIS

AS HOLLYWOOD READIES A MAJOR NEW BIOPIC, *MICK BROWN* CONSIDERS THE LIFE AND DEATH, AND AFTERLIFE, OF THE MOST ENDURING POP IMMORTAL OF THEM ALL

IN 1957, HE LOOKED TRULY LIKE A GOD. Breathtakingly — almost indecently — handsome. There in his $10,000 gold lamé suit, the chiselled face, the saturnine eyes, the greased-back pompadour hair, a cowlick falling over his forehead, the curl of the lip, arrogant and amused.

The suit was made by Nudie's Rodeo Tailors of Hollywood at the behest of Elvis's manager Colonel Tom Parker, who wanted a golden suit for his Golden Boy — "boy", in the proprietorial sense being how the Colonel would often refer to his charge, gold being the currency that Elvis was minting, not least for the Colonel, at the height of his fame.

The "$10,000" price tag, like most things to do with the Colonel, was an exaggeration, showmanship; the actual bill of sale was for $2,500. Elvis first wore the suit at a performance at Chicago's International Amphitheatre in March 1957. In the space of three years, he had recorded eight number-one records, among them "Heartbreak Hotel", "Hound Dog", "Love Me Tender" and "All Shook Up". He was 22 years old, already the hottest property in American music, soon to be the most famous singer in the world. Twenty years later, he would be dead.

Elvis was America writ large, in all its greatness and tawdriness, its promise and its disappointments, its fractured history and its promise of redemption. "The pure products of America go crazy," wrote the poet and writer William Carlos Williams, and none went crazier than Elvis, his heart giving out on 16th August 1977 as he sat on his lavatory in his Graceland mansion, bloated and broken and bemused by the ingestion of some 10,000 pills in the last year of his life. He was 42.

Medical examiners found that he had traces of 14 drugs in his system at the time of his death, 10 of which were present in significant quantities, including codeine, morphine, diazepam, pentobarbital and ethinamate — drugs most commonly prescribed for anxiety and insomnia.

In a way, it's easy to believe that Elvis now is bigger than he ever was when he was alive. He has become a myth. A morality tale. His music is lodged forever in the collective memory. His films are playing on an endless loop somewhere on TV.

His life has been dissected, pored over, analysed and referenced countless times in books and articles, such as this one, studied in university courses, endlessly memorialised in films, as souvenirs and in the caricatures of Elvis impersonators. Along with those two other defining figures of his generation, Marilyn Monroe and James Dean — the tragic American trilogy — his image is iconic.

In 2008, an Andy Warhol silk-screen, *Eight Elvises*, was sold by the Italian art collector Annibale Berlingieri in a private sale for $100m to an unidentified buyer, thought to be the Qatari royal family. In 2014, another Warhol painting, *Triple Elvis*, sold for nearly $82m at an auction at Christie's in New York. In the years since his death, the character of Elvis has featured in some 31 feature films, played by actors including Kurt Russell, Harvey Keitel and Don Johnson. According to the film critic John Beifuss, since 1957 there has been a minimum of 400 movies that contain some allusion to Elvis, 18 a year since 1998. In June, the Australian director Baz Luhrmann, of *Moulin Rouge!* and *The Great Gatsby* notoriety, will add to the list with a new film, starring Tom Hanks as the Colonel and a newcomer, Austin Butler, as Elvis.

The appeal to film-makers like Luhrmann is not difficult to understand: Elvis is estimated to be the best-selling solo music artist of all time, with sales of more than 500m records. Only the Beatles, with 600m, have sold more. Since his death, he has had 48 top-50 hits in the UK, including five number ones. You hear his records everywhere, on the radio, in adverts. Recently, walking out of the Francis Bacon exhibition at London's Royal Academy, I was struck to hear "Suspicious Minds" being played in the gift shop as people browsed the postcards, posters and catalogues illustrated with Bacon's hellish studies of the bestiality of man. The song sounded like a memento mori. All of us will eventually slip this mortal coil, but the greatest of us may attain a kind of immortality.

THE CREATION STORY

THERE WERE PEOPLE NAMED ELVIS BEFORE HIM, but nobody could be named Elvis after him without it being an act of acknowledgement and homage. It was his and no-one else's.

He was born in the city of Tupelo, in one of the poorest counties in Mississippi — a place of cotton fields and mills, limited job security and hand-to-mouth subsistence.

His father Vernon was a sharecropper and sometime truck driver; his mother Gladys a seamstress, a woman who, in Southern parlance, "didn't meet a stranger" — a font of warmth and good heart. Elvis idolised her.

Gladys was 21 and Vernon was 17 when they married — but they both lied about their ages. Gladys said she was 19 and Vernon said he was 22. Elvis was born less than two years later on 8 January, 1935, the firstborn of identical twins. His brother Jesse was stillborn. When Elvis was 13, Vernon moved the family 100 miles to Memphis, Tennessee, in search of work. "We were broke, man, broke," Elvis would later recall, "and we left Tupelo overnight."

He sucked up music from the radio and jukebox; close harmony singing by The Ink Spots; the Southern gospel quartet the Blackwood Brothers and the R&B singer Roy Brown, his particular favourite, whose smooth vocal style would be a formative influence and whose 1947 R&B hit "Good Rockin' Tonight" Elvis would cover for his second Sun single in 1954.

At Humes High School, he grew his hair long and slicked back when everybody else had crewcuts and dressed in pink and black. "He was just different," his school friend Red West would remember. "It gave people something to do, to bother him."

He spent whatever he could afford at Lansky Bros on Beale Street, Memphis's black Broadway; — he'd buy spiffy sports coats and shirts in neon blues and get-down pinks that were worn by bluesmen and street cats. "I put Elvis in his first suit," the owner Bernard Lansky would later remember, "and I put him in his last."

Elvis took a job driving a truck for a local electrics supply company. Nobody thought he'd ever amount to anything.

In the summer of 1953, he walked into a local studio, Memphis Recording Service, intending to make a recording as a birthday present for his mother. The studio was owned by Sam Phillips. He was a pioneering figure, with a particularly enlightened view of race relations — a prickly subject in Memphis in the 1950s. He recorded all sorts of music in his studio, but had a particular love for blues and R&B. He'd made recordings with artists such as Howlin' Wolf, BB King and Junior Parker, which he'd leased to record labels in Chicago and Los Angeles before setting up his own label, Sun. At a time when music was rigidly divided by race, Phillips is credited with perhaps the most prescient

Previous pages: Lynn Goldsmith/camera press

statement in the history of rock 'n' roll: "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars."

It sounds too pat to be true, but Phillips certainly realised that black music was popular with many young whites. It was the artists' race that prevented their music reaching a wider audience.

Elvis paid four dollars to record two songs on that afternoon he visited Memphis Recording Service — "My Happiness", which had been a hit for The Ink Spots, and a lachrymose ballad, "That's When Your Heartaches Begin". After he'd gone, a note was appended to his name: "Good ballad singer. Hold."

A few months later, he returned to the studio to make another four-dollar recording, with his eyes now set on a singing career. Phillips was sufficiently impressed to invite him back, this time accompanied by two local musicians, Scotty Moore and Bill Black. They worked on a couple of ballads and country songs, and at the end of the session, Elvis started vamping on "That's All Right", a country blues song written and originally recorded by Arthur Crudup in 1946.

With a bluegrass song, "Blue Moon of Kentucky" as the B-side, the record was released on Sun Records in 1954. Sam Phillips took the first pressing to a local R&B radio station and a white DJ named Dewey Phillips. After one play, the switchboard lit up. Dewey called Elvis to interview him on air. "Mr Phillips, I don't know anything about being interviewed," Elvis said. "Just don't say nothing dirty," Dewey replied.

Dewey asked where Elvis had gone to high school. "Humes," Elvis replied. "I wanted to get that out," Dewey later recalled, "because a lot of people listening had thought he was coloured."

"He has a white voice, sings with a Negro rhythm, which borrows in mood and emphasis from country styles," a Memphis paper noted. But the record hardly set the world alight, failing to make the national charts. It was his performances, onstage and on national television, that would ignite the Elvis phenomenon.

There is film of Elvis appearing on stage in his hometown of Tupelo in 1956, an outdoor, afternoon show. He is dressed all in black, an acoustic guitar slung over his shoulder, singing "Heartbreak Hotel", bumping and grinding as he slurs the words like a lascivious kiss — "I'm ever so lonely, *babeee*" — executing a series of rapid pelvic thrusts when Scotty Moore picks up the guitar solo, the girls crowded at the lip of the stage, arms outstretched in unbridled lust, while three cops in peaked caps look on, bemused.

Girls had swooned and screamed for Frank Sinatra in the 1940s. "Police and ambulances had to be summoned", read a report in the *New Republic* of one of Sinatra's New York shows. But as puzzled as commentators — and psychologists — might have been by the new phenomenon of "fandom", Sinatra did not threaten the natural order of things. Elvis blew that natural order apart. Sex, race, the perils of juvenile delinquency — Marlon Brando's biker movie *The Wild One* had been released a year before "That's All Right" — the cordite whiff of moral bankruptcy... he was the blue touchpaper, the match and the explosion. Parents fretted and gimcrack politicians, Baptist ministers, tub-thumping opportunists of every persuasion railed against the pernicious influence of "n****r music" on white teenagers succumbing to hysteria and lust. After Elvis, pop music would never be the same again.

COLONEL TOM PARKER

IT WAS BOTH A STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE, and a cruel twist of fate, that Elvis should have got involved with Colonel Parker: a carney, a huckster — shrewd, greedy and callous, the man who would make Elvis a star and, eventually, be a major figure in his destruction.

Of course, he wasn't really a colonel at all. His name was not Tom Parker. Nor, as he claimed, was he born in West Virginia.

He was actually born Andreas Cornelis van Kuijk in Holland, entering the United States illegally when he was 20 — a deception that would have been revealed had he ever allowed Elvis to realise his dream of coming to England.

He worked as a barker and sideshow pedlar in a travelling carnival. One stunt was to spray sparrows yellow and sell them as canaries; another he borrowed from the showman PT Barnum. Barnum had trouble getting his customers to leave his exhibits, so he put up a sign on the door saying, "Egress this way", charging an extra nickel, reasoning that most people would not be aware that egress is another word for exit.

Parker became a well-known figure in the South. In 1948, the governor of Louisiana gave him the honorary title of Colonel, and from then on, he instructed everyone to address him as such. By then, he had left the carnival behind and moved into managing country-and-western artists and promoting country music shows.

When he saw the effect that Elvis had on his audiences, he offered Sam Phillips $35,000 to buy Elvis's recording contract. Parker himself did not have the money, but he persuaded a major label, RCA, to front the cash, at the same time becoming Elvis's manager. It was a handshake deal. The Colonel took 50 per cent.

Parker cared little for Elvis's music; he saw him as a commodity, a paycheck — and he was right. At the early Elvis shows, he would move among the crowd, cigar between his teeth, selling autographed pictures for 50 cents each. Playing on the controversy surrounding Elvis, badges would also be on sale saying "I love Elvis" and "I hate Elvis" — both produced by Parker.

As a carnie, Parker would draw people to his sideshow promising "dancing chickens"; he'd throw feed on a hot plate and the chickens would jump around. Elvis was to become his dancing chicken.

No matter how detrimental to his long-term career, Elvis would bow to his every decision. The Colonel had brought him riches and recognition beyond his wildest dreams — and Elvis would forever be bound by gratitude and obeisance.

In 1958, at the height of his popularity, Elvis was drafted into the US army. He spent two years stationed in Germany, returning with a new haircut and a new career. He had appeared in four films before going into the army, including *Jailhouse Rock* and *King Creole*, and he harboured a desire to follow in the footsteps of his role models James Dean and Marlon Brando as an actor. Parker duly obliged, striking a movie deal whereby Elvis — and therefore the Colonel — got a piece of the movie money up front. Hal Kanter, who directed two Elvis movies, *Loving You* and *Blue Hawaii*, would describe Parker as "one of the sharpest con-men I've ever come across".

But Elvis's ambition to be a serious actor was thwarted by the pablum he was contractually obliged to appear in. The 27 films he made in the 1960s were, for the most part, formulaic musical comedies: vehicles for increasingly mediocre songs that drained him of any musical credibility.

It was not until 1968 that he would resurrect his musical career, with the live TV special, simply called *Elvis*, leading the following year to him recording *From Elvis* in Memphis, the sessions of which would produce two of his most timeless hits, "In The Ghetto" and "Suspicious Minds".

He was untouchable now, the Colonel his gatekeeper, secluded in his own world with his coterie of boyhood friends and hangers-on: "the Memphis Mafia", Southern boys like Elvis, who liked riding motorcycles, big cars, guns and chasing girls (not, in Elvis's case, that much →

On 27 June, 1968, at NBC TV studios in Burbank, California, Elvis performs for what became known as the '68 Comeback Special

chasing was required). "He had created his own world. He had to," as the singer Johnny Rivers put it. "There was nothing else for him to do."

The cultural rebellion brewing beyond the closed gates of his mansions in Memphis and Bel Air passed him by. He was a patriot, a proud American, invited to the White House in 1970 by Richard Nixon who presented him, with no discernible trace of irony, with an honorary Bureau of Narcotics badge. Elvis presented Nixon with a mounted Colt 45.

In Germany, Elvis had met Priscilla Beaulieu, the 14-year-old stepdaughter of a US Air Force officer stationed there. Elvis was besotted and, in 1963, Priscilla moved to Memphis, at first living with Elvis's parents and then, chastely, in her own quarters at Graceland, while Elvis was in Los Angeles making films and having an affair with the Swedish-American actress Ann-Margret.

In 1967, he married Priscilla in a ceremony arranged by the Colonel at the Aladdin hotel in Las Vegas, where the Colonel thought the roulette tables were the luckiest in town. According to Albert Goldman's scurrilous biography, the marriage was consummated on their wedding night, sexual relations ceasing shortly afterwards.

For the next 10 years, Elvis would embark on an intense regime of live performances, at amphitheatres and concert-halls across America, but mostly in Las Vegas — where the Colonel liked to be and the paychecks were largest.

"Elvis has left the building" is what they would announce as he was hurried off stage, past the thrusting, pawing fans —not teenagers, but women of a certain age whose teenage lives had been ignited by the young god, once touched never forgotten, desperate for a glimpse, as their husbands retreated to the endless night of the gaming tables.

It was Vegas that would destroy him, the Colonel pressuring him to perform, right up to the moment when he was sick and bloated, his act a parody of what it had once been — the first Elvis impersonator, as someone once put it.

In 2007, covering the Los Angeles murder trial of Phil Spector — dubbed the "First Tycoon of Teen", whose productions for the Crystals, the Ronettes and the Righteous Brothers had for a period in the early 1960s eclipsed Elvis's sales — I would sometimes sit in the courtroom with the doyenne of American court-reporting, Linda Deutsch of the Associated Press, who had covered the trials of Charles Manson, OJ Simpson and Michael Jackson. Her passion was Elvis. She had seen him perform on a number of occasions in Las Vegas, and gave one of the best descriptions of the power of artistry I have ever heard: when he looked out into the audience, she said, it was as if he was looking directly into the eyes of every person there.

Spector had produced demos of songs recorded by Elvis, claimed to have worked on his first album coming out of the army — although that's a matter of dispute — and idolised him, as every artist and producer of that era did.

Spector would sometimes travel to Las Vegas to see Elvis perform and would always go backstage after the show. Dan Kessel and his brother David were Spector's constant sidekicks in the 1970s and joined him and his constant bodyguard George on one visit. "Elvis had the full Memphis Mafia. It was very intense," Dan once told me, "the full Phil trip, and the full Elvis trip. They knew who each other were. They were like two panthers checking each other out. You could tell — mutual respect. It was definitely one of those moments."

John Lennon would later confess the Beatles were "terrified" on the night in 1965 when the group made their way to Elvis's Bel Air home for an audience with the King, negotiated by their manager Brian Epstein. Elvis's career was at its lowest point in 10 years. He had not had a number-one single in America for three years. The Beatles had had 10. He was bemused by them; they were worshipful to the point of speechlessness. "It was a little bit awkward because they kept looking at him and not really saying anything," Priscilla remembered. Finally, Elvis said, "Well, guys, if you're going to just sit around staring at me, I might as well go to bed," breaking the silence by picking up a bass guitar and playing along to the song on his jukebox, Charlie Rich's "Mohair Sam". They spent the next three hours jamming and talking about music. At the end of the evening, the Beatles floated the hope that Elvis would visit them where they were staying in Los Angeles. After they'd left, Elvis supposedly told one of his entourage, "I'm not going up there. I did my duty. I met them, and that's it."

Meeting Nixon five years later, Elvis would tell the President that the Beatles were "a real force for anti-American spirit".

GOING TO GRACELAND

GIVEN THE CHOICE OF PRIME REAL ESTATE HIS FORTUNE WOULD AVAIL, it is curious that Elvis should have chosen to spend his days in a mock-colonial mansion perched on the crest of a hill offering a commanding view of a four-lane highway — today named in his honour, Elvis Presley Boulevard — and lined with neon-lit motels, fast-food outlets and car dealerships decked out in plastic bunting.

The environs of Graceland have been somewhat enlarged since Elvis's death. The original 13-acre estate is now a sprawling complex spread across 120 acres, including its own shopping centre, 450-room resort hotel, car parks and a motor museum. More than 500,000 visitors make the pilgrimage each year.

I made my own journey some years ago. A small bus ferried visitors up the drive to the mansion itself, and we entered with the hushed reverence of visitors to the Sistine Chapel, except here was not symmetry, beauty and the spirit in flight, but heinous taste, berserk ostentation, the evidence of a soul unhinged. Bob Krasnow, a record executive, whose label Blue Thumb Records released records by Ike Turner, famously quipped after visiting Turner's home that he "didn't know it was possible to spend a million dollars in Woolworths". Graceland proved it was possible to spend two million.

We trooped through through its fantasy rooms, admiring the carpeted walls and ceilings, the nitrous yellow bar-fittings and fake animal-skin furnishings, the security cameras in every room, linked to a central console so that Elvis could spy on his guests from the privacy of his bedroom — closed to the public "out of respect for Elvis".

The "walk of fame" was clogged with the gold records and stage costumes, including the suit of gold lamé, retrieved in 1987 by Elvis Presley Enterprises at a cost of $2m dollars from Colonel Parker, among the estimated 35 tons of "stuff" that Parker had stored in four buildings in a Nashville suburb.

And there was Elvis's collection of guns (his "favourite" was a turquoise-handled Colt 45) and his honorary sheriff's badges. The tour guide, a matronly woman, stressed his respect for law and order, his philanthropy, his love for mother and country and his profound religiosity. "They called him the 'King of Rock 'n' Roll'", she murmured, "but he would tell them, there is only one King, and that is Jesus Christ."

I looked in vain for the evidence of his downfall: the selection of pill bottles, the framed doctor's prescriptions, the symbolic plates heaped with artery-inflating junk food. But they were nowhere to be found. →

Getty Images

His funeral was held at Graceland, where thousands queued to see his open casket. Outside the gates, two people died when a car ran out of control. More than 80,000 people lined the processional route to the Forest Hill Cemetery in Memphis, where Elvis was entombed in the crypt at the Presley room. But after fans and souvenir-seekers had tampered with his grave, Elvis and his mother Gladys Presley were moved to their current resting place in the Memorial Gardens at Graceland, later to be joined there by his father Vernon.

At the graveside, scented with an abundance of floral tributes, women dabbed at their eyes with handkerchiefs and clutched at their husbands' arms for support. A man whispered to me, "It's like an anthropological study of how religions get started."

But, of course, the religion had started on the day Elvis died. His miraculous resurrection has been witnessed in the years since, in supermarkets, gas stations and fast-food outlets. He was spotted appearing in the background of an airport scene in the 1990 film *Home Alone* and, famously, through a telescope lens, on the moon. A Bristol businessman, visiting Graceland, was astonished to hear Elvis addressing him from his tomb, saying, "I can't stand tulips. Why did you bring me goddam tulips?"

His image has been kept alive by legions of imitators, most favouring the mid-period Vegas look of white jewel-encrusted jumpsuit and scimitar sideburns. Some years ago, on Elvis's birthday, I made another pilgrimage, this time to the Graceland Palace, a Chinese restaurant on the Old Kent Road, where each night the owner Paul Chan — "the Chinese Elvis" — would burst out of the kitchen in full regalia and astonish customers digging into chow mein and sweet and sour pork by performing an energetic round of Elvis hits, culminating with "Are You Lonesome Tonight" — before departing to his second restaurant in Tunbridge Wells, where the show would be repeated.

Like holy relics, Elvis's belongings have been traded at auctions and fairs. In 1994, more than 1,000 Elvis Presley items, including guitars, cars, macramé pot holders, a grey wool "Superfly" hat, and the record of his birth, acquired from the secretary of the doctor who brought him into the world, were auctioned in Las Vegas. Elvis's navy blue denim swim trunks (size 38 waist) fetched $2,070; his pyjama bottoms went for $2,250 and his comb for $950.

Like pieces of the Cross, these relics are the currency of the faithful, from the authentic (the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, improbably an ardent Elvis fan who visited Graceland three times, securing a piece of picket fence with a nail that may or may not have been knocked in by the King's own hand), to the most gimcrack. Elvisly Yours is a mail-order business, which not only sells every imaginable merchandise from TCB medallions to Elvis toiletries sets, but also acts as a virtual chapel of prayer where worshippers can leave tributes and poems, like "Elvis, Take My Hand" by Diane Burgess:

When the darkness surrounds me
Elvis, take my hand
When I'm afraid and lonely,
Help me understand.

Stay by my side, Elvis,
Help me keep the burning candle alight.
Show me the path I have to take,
Lead me to all that's right.

Watch over me, Elvis,
With all your love and care,
Give me a sign, Elvis,
So that I know that you're there.

Elvis hear my plea,
Elvis hear my call,
I'm tired and I'm weary,
And I need you most of all.

Imagine carrying the burden of people's dreams and expectations; imagine being able to have everything you desire — money, sex, fame, riches — everything except that which the God you believed in denied you and which you desired most of all — peace of mind. Who would not go mad?

THE SONG

IN 1971, IN A CLUB IN LOS ANGELES, the country singer Mickey Newbury performed an impromptu medley of three traditional songs: "Dixie", "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "All My Trials". At a time when America was being torn apart by racial and cultural strife, the medley was a gesture of reconciliation that carried a potentially explosive potency.

"Dixie", which had originated in blackface minstrel shows of the 1850s, was strongly identified with slavery and the Confederate cause: in the late 1960s, with the rise of the Civil Rights movement, its performance had been banned in some states. In direct opposition to that, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was the marching song of the Union Army during the American Civil War, while "All My Trials" is a spiritual of uncertain origin that became popular among folk singers during the protest movements of the late 1950s and 1960s.

The year after Newbury had recorded the song, Elvis began including it in his live performances, and it became the centrepiece of his act thereafter. You can watch him performing it in *Aloha From Hawaii via Satellite*, live in Honolulu, in January 1973 on YouTube.

Driven on by the demands of the Colonel, 1973 was the year in which Elvis would perform 168 concerts, his busiest ever, the year in which his already parlous health would go into perilous decline. Twice he would overdose on barbiturates, spending three days in a coma in his hotel suite after the first incident, and towards the end of the year he would be hospitalised, semi-comatose from the effects of his addiction to the pain-killer pethidine.

In Hawaii, he is dressed in his white spangled jumpsuit; a huge diamond ring glitters on one finger of the hand clasping the microphone. He is accompanied by an orchestra, a white close-harmony gospel quartet and a trio of black female singers, the Sweet Inspirations. Everything about it — the arrangement, the costumes, the production — should be kitsch, overblown, an exercise in contrived sentimentality. But it transcends all that, becoming something magnificent, beautiful and touching. It is Elvis in excelsis. The most American song that this most American of artists ever sang. A song about his country that he makes a song about himself. He is an artist in complete command, the voice like flawless velvet. Sweat runs in rivulets across his forehead and down his cheeks as he sings the chorus of "All My Trials" — "Hush little baby, don't you cry, you know your daddy's bound to die, but all my trials, Lord, will soon be over." The key changes. As the drums sound three beats, signalling the coming crescendo, he gives a snarl of exultation and defiance, then hymns, full-throated, the final line. "Glory, glory, Hallelujah, his truth is marching on."

Four years from death, but unbeaten, unbowed, triumphant, the once and forever King. ○

Getty Images

Elvis sits for an interview at the Hilton hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, on 4 September 1972 to promote his televised concert, 'Elvis: Aloha from Hawaii'

Navy blue/yellow checked wool jacket, £4,500; brown/red checked silk shirt, £1,050; brown/beige/black silk tie, £170; brown denim-cotton trousers, £990, all by DIOR. Vintage sunglasses, price on request, by GENERAL EYEWEAR. Black TCB pendant, £11, by ELVIS BELTS. 18k gold chain, £16,300; 18k yellow gold-white diamond-black enamel ring (on ring finger), £4,550; 18k gold-black ceramic ring (on pinky), £1,950, all by STEPHEN WEBSTER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MARIANO VIVANCO

FASHION BY
LUKE DAY

FITS FOR A KING

SUMMER FASHION, ALL SHOOK UP

THIS PAGE
Black jersey stretch shirt, £1,200; matching trousers, £1,580, both by LOUIS VUITTON. Black vintage leather boots, stylist's own. Black leather belt with red and gold jewels, £119, by ELVIS BELTS. Rings, as before, both by STEPHEN WEBSTER

OPPOSITE
Chocolate silk-twill shirt, £2,800; black wool trousers (part of suit), £3,400; multicoloured silk scarf, £485, all by HERMÈS. Sunglasses, as before, by GENERAL EYEWEAR. Pendant, as before, and black TCB ring (left hand), £20, both by ELVIS BELTS. Ring (on scarf), stylist's own. Chain, and rings (right hand), as before, all by STEPHEN WEBSTER

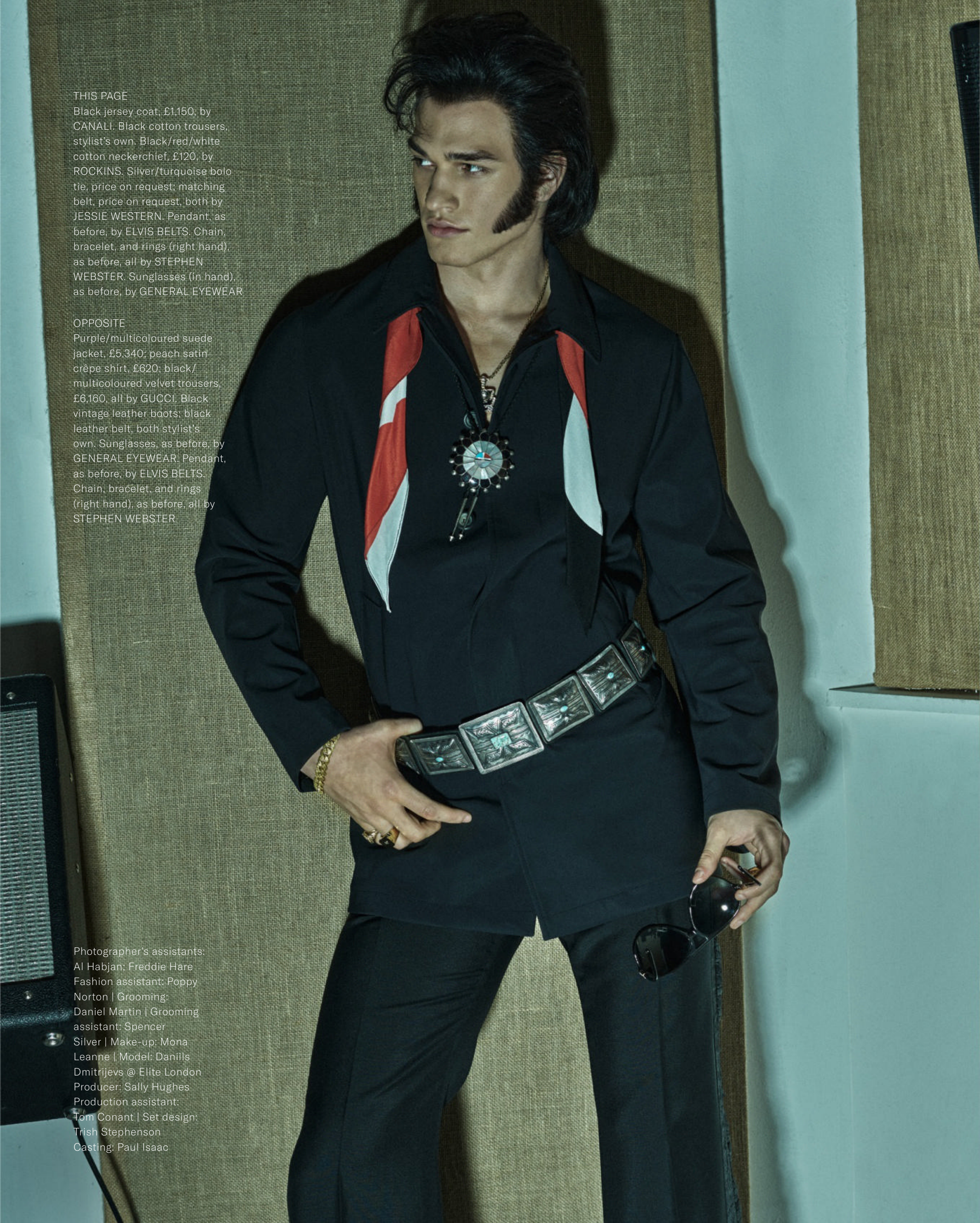
ELVIS wears taupe wool jacket, £4,180; white poplin shirt, £405; mocha silk trousers, £560, all by RALPH LAUREN PURPLE LABEL. Multicoloured silk tie, stylist's own. Sunglasses (in hand), as before, by GENERAL EYEWEAR. Pendant, and ring (left hand), as before, both by ELVIS BELTS. 18k gold bracelet, £13,900; chain, and rings (right hand), as before, all by STEPHEN WEBSTER

GUITARIST wears blue denim shirt, £155; blue cotton jeans, £219, both by POLO RALPH LAUREN. Tan leather boots, price on request, by JESSIE WESTERN

THIS PAGE
Grey wool sweater, £1,400;
navy wool trousers, £1,280,
both by PRADA. Black
vintage leather boots,
stylist's own. Sunglasses,
as before, by GENERAL
EYEWEAR. Pendant,
and ring (left hand), as
before, both by ELVIS
BELTS. Chain, as before,
by STEPHEN WEBSTER

OPPOSITE
Brown wool jacket, £1,850;
purple silk shirt, £750;
brown wool trousers,
£725, all by VALENTINO.
Sunglasses, as before,
by GENERAL EYEWEAR.
Black leather belt,
stylist's own. Rings, and
bracelet, as before, both
by STEPHEN WEBSTER

Brown/black velvet bomber jacket, £2,500; grey/black checked wool shirt and trousers (comes as a suit), £1,950, both by GIORGIO ARMANI. Black silk scarf, £150, by ROCKINS. 24k gold-plated ring (on scarf), £231, by ALIGHIERI. Chain, as before, by STEPHEN WEBSTER. Black leather belt, £255, by JESSIE WESTERN



THIS PAGE
Black jersey coat, £1,150, by CANALI. Black cotton trousers, stylist's own. Black/red/white cotton neckerchief, £120, by ROCKINS. Silver/turquoise bolo tie, price on request; matching belt, price on request, both by JESSIE WESTERN. Pendant, as before, by ELVIS BELTS. Chain, bracelet, and rings (right hand), as before, all by STEPHEN WEBSTER. Sunglasses (in hand), as before, by GENERAL EYEWEAR

OPPOSITE
Purple/multicoloured suede jacket, £5,340; peach satin crêpe shirt, £620; black/multicoloured velvet trousers, £6,160, all by GUCCI. Black vintage leather boots; black leather belt, both stylist's own. Sunglasses, as before, by GENERAL EYEWEAR. Pendant, as before, by ELVIS BELTS. Chain, bracelet, and rings (right hand), as before, all by STEPHEN WEBSTER

Photographer's assistants: Al Habjan; Freddie Hare
Fashion assistant: Poppy Norton | Grooming: Daniel Martin | Grooming assistant: Spencer Silver | Make-up: Mona Leanne | Model: Daniils Dmitrijevs @ Elite London
Producer: Sally Hughes
Production assistant: Tom Conant | Set design: Trish Stephenson
Casting: Paul Isaac

ALL BACK TO THEIRS

WITH THE 1990S REVIVAL IN FULL SWING, *JOHNNY DAVIS* — HE WAS THERE! — REMEMBERS THE PARTY DECADE THAT FASHION AND POP CULTURE CANNOT FORGET

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUS & STELLA

Clockwise from top left: the rapper Goldie, who released the revolutionary drum and bass album 'Timeless' in 1995; Damien Hirst's shark was commissioned in 1991 by Charles Saatchi; bibulous novelist Irvine Welsh published 'Trainspotting' in 1993; superstar DJs The Chemical Brothers in 1997; indie queen Justine Frischmann of Elastica at Glastonbury 1998; Nirvana's Kurt Cobain with Courtney Love and their daughter Frances Bean at the MTV Video Music Awards, 1993; tabloid darlings Jay Kay and Denise van Outen at the opening of Home nightclub in Leicester Square, 1999; Damon Albarn of Blur at the Brits, 1997; The Verve's Richard Ashcroft at Pinkpop Festival in Holland, 1998; trip-hop artist Tricky at Glastonbury, 1998; Brad Pitt in David Fincher's nightmarish 'Fight Club' (1999); frenemies Liam Gallagher of Oasis and Robbie Williams of Take That at Glastonbury, 1995; meeting of minds Posh 'n' Becks, 1999

OPENING THE DOOR OF HIS HOME ON A MINOR TERRACED STREET IN BRIGHTON, Norman Cook, 35 years old, tall, balding, and who makes music under the name Fatboy Slim, introduces himself with the following question: "Are you a caner?"

Cook means: do I take drugs? Just off the train from London and with a head still nipping from the night before, I laugh and say, "I guess I'd put myself in that camp, yes."

Cook, famously, is a card-carrying caner.

"I'm a useless party fiend who's not a role model for anyone and who's got nothing intelligent to say apart from 'Let's 'ave it'," as he puts it.

Cook's house is covered in yellow smiley faces, rave culture's adopted symbol. There are smiley teapots, smiley mugs and smiley clocks. I can see that Cook manages his accounts on an outsized smiley calculator. Around the clubs of Brighton, the property is known as "The House of Love", partly on account of its décor, and partly on account of its reputation as a place of hedonistic shenanigans.

"Whoever is DJing in Brighton invariably ends up here," he says.

In an upstairs back room, I've interrupted Cook tinkering away on a new song. Cutting up bits of Dick Dale-style surf guitar with a thumping breakbeat and a looped sample ("Right about now, the funk soul brother/Check it out now, the funk soul brother"), the track is called "The Rockafeller Skank" and will soon become ubiquitous.

It is a Saturday afternoon in January 1998 and I have come to interview Cook for a magazine I've started working at, *The Face*. The plan is that Cook will take me clubbing around Brighton as a backdrop to my profile of him. We will visit a night called *Mr Fabulous and Mr Mental Present: Fabulous and Mental!*, among others.

But before we leave, Cook suggests a livener. On the back of a CD on his living-room table, he has laid out four lines of cocaine. But there are two of us.

"One for each nostril," he explains.

TODAY, NORMAN COOK IS A REFORMED CHARACTER. He entered rehab in 2009 and hasn't touched drink or drugs since. But drugs run through the 1990s like the proverbial stick of Brighton rock. History dictates that clubbing as we know it became a thing in this country with 1988's "Summer of Love", but it was the next decade when everyone worked out how to monetise and make it mainstream. The era of superclubs like Cream in Liverpool and Renaissance in Mansfield. Of triple-mix CDs called things like *Havin' It Ibiza II Mixed Live by Alex P & Brandon Block*. Of "superstar" DJs like Sasha and Danny Rampling. Soft drinks were advertised with rave graphics. Popular T-shirts included Hysteric Glamour's "Junkie's Baddy Powder" — in the Johnson's baby powder font — and "Techno" in the Tesco font. Of Mondays when Radio 1 Breakfast Show DJs would talk nudge-nudgingly of overcooking it at the weekend. "Suicide Tuesdays" were a legitimate excuse for being in a foul temper at work.

Drugs haven't gone anywhere, but I would suggest that today's young people perhaps have a slightly more enlightened attitude about when and where to take them. They certainly don't need to show off about them. But in popular culture in the 1990s, drugs were everywhere, all the time. Oasis, famously, were mad for them. Pop-dance band The Shamen went on Saturday morning kids' telly with a song whose chorus literally went: "Es are good." Brian Harvey, from the boy band East 17, told a radio interviewer that he'd recently taken a dozen Es, since ecstasy was a "safe drug".

Later, Harvey ran himself over with his own car after, apparently, eating too many jacket potatoes and opening the driver's door to be sick.

WHY AM I GOING ON ABOUT DRUGS? I'm trying to remember myself... yes, that's it. Because they are

Right, from top: British supermodels Naomi Campbell and Kate Moss in 1999; rapper Tupac Shakur's debut album, '2Pacalypse Now', was released in 1991; DJ Norman Cook, aka Fatboy Slim, DJing in 1998. Opposite, from top: the original 'Tomb Raider' game, from 1996; the ubiquitous Nintendo Gameboy, released in the UK in 1990; Sony's PlayStation, which went on sale in the UK 1995; the Super Nintendo, released in 1992

ON THE BACK OF A CD, HE HAS LAID OUT FOUR LINES OF COKE. BUT THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF US. ‘ONE FOR EACH NOSTRIL’

inseparable from my experience at *The Face* in that period, when I had a job at the magazine at the centre of the pop-culture universe. Before TikTok, Instagram, Spotify, Reddit, Reels, Stories, YouTube, Facebook, influencers, Grailed and Hypebeast, if you were under 30 and had an interest in pop culture, the place you found out about it was in magazines. Published monthly and sold in newsagents for less than £2.50, these colourful and glossy objects were nice to look at and told you what was what, and who was who — and were consumed in their hundreds of thousands. There were other titles covering similar territory — *Sky*, *Q*, *Mixmag*, *Loaded*, *i-D* — but the don was indisputably *The Face*. Better-looking, better-written, smart without being pretentious and often very funny. Like thousands of other people of a certain age, I had grown up outside London, using it as a monthly teleportation device into a world of glamour, cool and excitement that was not my parents’ sitting room. It reported culture but created its own culture, too, helping launch the careers of a generation of photographers, writers, stylists, editors and commentators including Juergen Teller, Steven Klein, Venetia Scott, Ekow Eshun, David Sims, Corinne Day, Katie Grand and Chris Heath.

PEOPLE HAVE PLENTY OF PLACES to get their get their culture and style “fix” these days. But it is perhaps instructive that the 1990s revival is such that *The Face* itself relaunched in 2019, having been shut for over a decade — surfing a wave of industry goodwill, perhaps, from those very people who’d grown up reading it. I, for one, was obsessed with it, to the point of ringing up the receptionist at Exmouth House in east London to check an on-sale date. Or, on another occasion, to be greeted with a suitably withering response — I’d have been disappointed with anything else — to asking what trainers Jay Kay from Jamiroquai was wearing in a photoshoot and where I could buy them. (Puma States, from Duffer of St George. A bus trip to London followed, only for me to ruin the shoes at an Ibiza foam party.)

So it felt like winning a competition when I was sent there on a work-experience placement from a postgrad course at City University, and then offered a job. I was given a desk in the corner of then-editor Sheryl Garratt’s office. One of my first assignments was to go through an enormous box of club flyers that had been sent in, to see if there was anything that might be worth *The Face* covering. Garratt, a club evangelist herself — her reissued book *Adventures in Wonderland*, the definitive story of the scene, was longlisted for the Penderyn Music Book Prize in 2021 — said that I was now *The Face*’s “Clubs Editor”. The job description was fluid. In practice, it meant I could get into any club I wanted to, for free, with as many of my mates as I liked. Doubtless my “reviews” were generally positive. As soon as the promoters knew *The Face* had arrived, we’d be whisked into some backroom — desk piled high with the night’s takings, Guy Ritchie-film style — and given preposterously strong ecstasy. I was 24 years old. This was my first job.

When I wasn’t off my napper dancing to “U Sure Do” by Strike or “Yéké Yéké (Hardfloor Remix)” by Mory Kante, there was some actual journalism to have a go at. People tend to refer to *The Face* as a “1980s style mag” — publishing legend Nick Logan, formerly of *NME* and *Smash Hits*, launched it in 1980, inventing the style press with a mix of popstar interviews and street and club-fashion reporting that he produced independently. But its most successful period was during the 1990s under Richard Benson (now an *Esquire* editor-at-large), who replaced Garratt. This has a lot to do with Benson’s brilliance as a cultural observer. After some persuasion, the people at PlayStation decided that his idea to put a render of Lara Croft on the cover — *Tomb Raider* had become the biggest thing in video games, scarcely the usual concern of the style press — was a good one. Commissioning an underground comic artist named Jamie Hewlett to do a monthly strip five years before Gorillaz released a single, was another.

But it’s also to do with the way culture exploded back then, something that magazines were uniquely placed to cover. Suddenly, an indie guitar band like Blur could be dressed in shirts and ties and photographed for the cover in a set of high-concept images as boardroom bankers. Or Kurt Cobain in a tea dress and chipped red nail varnish. In 1997, we put the Spice Girls, then the world’s biggest pop band, on the cover, wearing bikinis. The issue sold out. Nick Logan appeared on the shop floor asking if there was any way to reprint it.

These days, all culture is everywhere all the time — you’re as likely to hear about the hot new band on *The Graham Norton Show* as you are in *Vice* — but back then, plucking out an aspect of it and giving it a magazine-cover makeover was a statement that meant something.

IN THE 2020S, THE 1990S ARE BACK IN FASHION. Harry Styles performed at the 2021 Grammys in →

a yellow checked Gucci blazer and lavender feather boa, a look apparently inspired by Alicia Silverstone's character in 1995's *Clueless*. *Pam & Tommy*, the story of a VHS sex tape stolen from the then-couple's home and uploaded onto a nascent internet, has been one of TV's big talking points. *The Matrix* and *Scream* are back in the cinema. *Friends* is bigger than ever.

In fashion, you can take your pick from the return of plaid shirts, biker jackets, cargo pants, bucket hats, combat boots, overalls (with one strap undone), baseball (sorry, "dad") caps and outsized windbreakers.

Part of this is the familiar 20-year cycle. The 1950s came round again in the 1970s, the 1970s were hip in the 1990s. It's long enough ago now that what's old seems new again. People who came of age in the 1990s now hold positions in the media where they can spend their budgets on things they feel nostalgic for — hence the *Beavis and Butt-Head* relaunch and Netflix's upcoming *That '70s Show* reboot... *That '90s Show*, presumably.

There's also a run of books. Chuck Klosterman, the celebrated US critic who in the 1990s worked as a music writer for *Spin*, has just published *The Nineties*, 370 pages of thoughts on everything from Daniel Clowes to Rosario Dawson. Closer to home, Jane Savidge has written *Here They Come with Their Make-Up On* about the band Suede, a follow-up to *Lunch with The Wild Frontiers: A Story of Britpop and Excess in 13 and a ½ Chapters*. With John Best, Savidge co-founded the music PR agency Savage & Best and was pivotal in instigating Britpop, representing not just Suede but Elastica, Pulp, The Verve, The Auteurs, Menswear and loads of others. I went out on my first "business lunch" with Savage & Best, terrified and mute during my first week at *The Face*, and sat opposite Jane — who was then called Phill — with her geometrically bobbed blonde hair and hoop earrings, genuinely unable to work out if she was a boy or a girl. Ahead of her time, that Jane Savidge. Unlike the ladettes, who thankfully came and went. Though I can't help but smile at how Denise Van Outen's new memoir, *A Bit Of Me: From Basildon to Broadway and Back*, details her "hedonistic 90s heyday" — "a whirlwind of Concordes, private jets and arriving at Glastonbury in a helicopter" — while dating Jay Kay. And flashing her bra at Prince Charles backstage at Party in the Park while he was shaking hands with Steps. (Flashing your bra at Prince Charles backstage at Party in the Park might just be the most 1990s activity it is possible to imagine.)

But it's not just the folks who lived through it. A generation who were in nappies in the 1990s are nostalgic for it, too. The video for 2018's Charli XCX and Troye Sivan song "1999" included references to the blue iMac G3, Steve Jobs, Britney Spears, Eminem, *The Sims*, *The Blair Witch Project* and the music videos for TLC's "Waterfalls" and The Backstreet Boys' "I Want It That Way". On the cover, they're dressed up as Neo and Trinity. The Instagram account @90sanxiety (sample posts: a Nokia 3310 displaying the game *Snake*; beautiful *Titanic*-era Leonardo DiCaprio) has 2.3m followers. This year, the fashion press has been cheerfully reporting on a style called "indie sleaze". Lumped in with the 1990s revival, it seems to take in everything from The Libertines (who broke through in 2000), Hedi Slimane-era Dior Homme (2001-2007) and The New Romantics (the 1980s). For some reason, Jeremy Scott, today of Moschino, is in there too.

"The look is a messy amalgam of 1990s grunge and 1980s opulence with a slightly erotic undertone, topped off with an almost pretentious take on retro style," explained *Vogue* in January. Right, gotcha.

Slightly more usefully, TikTok "trend forecaster" @oldloserinbrooklyn, who apparently came up with the name, suggests that indie sleaze is born from Covid. "We've been in lockdown for essentially two years, and people are really craving community and creativity. I feel like, with the indie sleaze subculture 15 years ago, community, art and music were so powerful — that's what bought people together. I think specific elements, more so than fashion, will become prevalent, as well as the style of photography," she says. In other words: we've all been locked up, now let's party.

I think @oldloserinbrooklyn is onto something here. Community and creativity were super powerful in the 1990s. I would happily make the case for that being what made it the last great decade.

In cinema, it gave us Quentin Tarantino, whose *Reservoir Dogs* (1992; much bigger in the UK than it ever was in the US) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994) kicked the gate down for Wes Anderson, Alexander Payne, Richard Linklater and a new generation of style-savvy filmmakers who surfed the arthouse/commerce line. Disney came back from the dead with the first two *Toy Story* movies (1995; 1999). Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996), the adaptation of Irvine Welsh's 1993 book, remains a cultural North Star. Literary young bucks Nick Hornby (*Fever Pitch*, 1992), Dave Eggers (*Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, 1998) and Douglas Coupland (*Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, 1991) became superstars.

In art, there was Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Tracey Emin, Gary Hume and the rest of the YBAs. The pop video became a three-minute-thirty-second art form in itself, launching the careers of Spike Jonze, David Fincher, Michel Gondry and Chris Cunningham.

Never mind cut-and-paste indie sleaze: my memory of 1990s fashion is that it was dominated by actual mavericks and one-of-a-kind geniuses, designers who reimagined the idea of what clothes can mean. Alexander McQueen, with his shows as one-off 10-minute art installations; Raf Simons turning the imagery of cult bands like Manic Street Preachers and Kraftwerk into layered, hooded and sculptural streetwear; his luxuriously bearded Antwerp cohort Walter Van Beirendonck, who made pullovers that seemed more like neon provocations than something to keep the cold out.

I sat in the audience at London's Sadler's Wells theatre one June evening in 1999, and my jaw hit the floor with everyone else's as Hussein

FLASHING YOUR BRA AT PRINCE CHARLES MIGHT BE THE MOST 1990S ACTIVITY IT IS POSSIBLE TO IMAGINE

Chalayan showed a collection of womenswear that effortlessly untied into wooden furniture. The show notes say it was inspired by a nomadic and portable existence. It's hard to think of a more au courant idea than that in 2022.

It's mind-bending to try and get your head around now, but the luxury fashion houses, the conglomerate behemoths with all their power and advertising spend, barely existed in the 1990s. Prada opened its first menswear shop in 1998. The idea of fashion companies solidifying their bottom line with airport concession fragrances, leather luggage dongles and logo T-shirts would have been considered irredeemably naff.

Fun and optimism were everywhere. Multiculturalism and alternative media were on the rise. Gay culture entered the mainstream. Advances in technology, including cable TV and the World Wide Web, offered new possibilities of connectivity and togetherness.

Steven Daly and Nathaniel Wice's 1995 book *Alt Culture: An A-Z Guide to 90s America* now reads like a brain dump of positive ideas: snowboarding, Peta, gay marriage.

Baby boomers Tony Blair and Bill Clinton had swept into office on a wave of youthful optimism to clear away the hangover of 1980s conservatism. One of them played electric guitar. The other one played saxophone and wore Ray-Bans.

Madonna invented the live-show-as-unmissable-event with her *Blond Ambition* tour (1990) and the subsequent *Madonna: Truth or Dare* documentary-of-the-tour (1991), for which one could make a fair claim that it invented warts-and-all reality TV and rewired how we consume celebrity culture. (Backstage, Kevin Costner tells Madonna, "I thought it was neat." Turning away, she responds by sticking her fingers down her throat.) No *Blond Ambition*, no grand pop spectacle tours from the likes of Katy Perry, Beyoncé and Lady Gaga today.

The quality of television improved exponentially: *Twin Peaks* (1990); *The Sopranos* (1999); *The Day Today* (1994); *Queer as Folk* (1999); *South Park* (1997). The TV event of the decade wasn't a TV show, but the world's then-longest and slowest televised car chase — when, in 1994, America plus a global audience of 95 million watched OJ Simpson being driven along 60 miles of US freeway in a white Ford Bronco, sitting in the back seat, occasionally sobbing and holding a gun to his head. Its speed did at least give people enough time to get down to the side of the road with home-made banners: "Free OJ", "Run, OJ, Run" and "The Juice is Loose". He had just been charged with the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman, who had been found stabbed to death outside Brown's condominium on 12 June 1994. (Simpson was later arrested, tried and acquitted for the murders). He was now →

Left, from top: Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet in the decade's biggest film, 'Titanic', 1997; Gucci-era Tom Ford, 1997; pop sensations the Spice Girls backstage at the Brit Awards, 1997; Tony Blair and Noel Gallagher at 10 Downing Street, 1997; between 1992 and 1997, Pamela Anderson was the star of TV megahit, 'Baywatch'

IN THE 90S, MONEY SEEMED TO BE EVERYWHERE. I DON'T RECALL EVER HAVING ANY, BUT THAT DIDN'T SEEM TO BE A PROBLEM

heading to the airport; items found in the car included $9,000 in cash and a fake goatee.

Those two hours of TV arguably changed our perception of celebrity, pop culture and criminal justice forever. (The 2016 series *The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story* was a mesmerising reminder of how much and how little has changed in the intervening 22 years.)

NOW, OJ'S FLIGHT WOULD BE LIVESTREAMED ON Twitter, or TikTok. In the 1990s, the internet barely existed. My memory of "getting" it at work at some point around 1996 or 1997, when it was dial-up, was that I couldn't think what to use it for. I remember looking up the band Underworld, because I liked them and they seemed quite future-y, and getting a page of black and white graphics. Amazon launched in summer 1995, selling books.

"Do you have a favourite site on the net?" I asked the designer Helmut Lang, in the August 1999 fashion issue.

"Well, actually, no," he said. "Not really. But for me, the whole internet thing is like when we got introduced to the fax machine. Our lives changed completely. I think that what happened a hundred years ago with the Industrial Revolution is happening again now. It's the Technical Revolution."

It was also a time when everything was beginning to move out of its own lane. Björk dated Tricky. Goldie made a song with Noel Gallagher. Hands down the greatest rapper of the decade was a dirt-poor Detroit kid called Eminem, who was white. London clubs like Trash on New Oxford Street and The Heavenly Sunday Social on Great Portland Street delighted in playlists that pitched David Bowie's "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide" next to Daft Punk's "Da Funk", or The Temptations next to Schoolly D. On *The Face* trips to Ibiza (yes, we all went on holiday together) the CD we played the most was The Verve's *Urban Hymns*. Fatboy Slim, The Chemical Brothers and others found success in marrying the beats of hip-hop with the riffs of rock. "To me, having the Stooges and

Salt-N-Pepa on at the same time, that was Trash," David Dewaele, one of the club's DJs, later commented. Thus, "bootlegging" was born — not-strictly-legal vinyl mashups of Destiny's Child's "Independent Women Part I" with 10cc's "Dreadlock Holiday", for example. Or, indeed, the Stooges' "No Fun" over the top of Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It". Don't knock it til you've heard it.

The 1990s were and will always remain the zenith for bands selling records. The knock-on effect for journalists was record company money for press trips. Why profile Goldie at home in north London, when you can fly over to Florida and interview him on tour there? And also watch him blag a load of jewellery, grills for his teeth and clear the Stüssy store of so much free gear that he couldn't close the boot of his limo.

Money seemed to be everywhere. You can stick a pair of combat boots and a "dad" cap on and call it a 1990s revival if you like, but there's no way being 24 in 2022 can be like being 24 in 1996. No one had a crippling student loan, for starters. I don't recall ever having any money, but that didn't seem to be a problem. A silly job in the media means you get invited to all sorts of corporate-sponsored events promoting some new film or football boots — believe me, there is such a thing as a free lunch — and that's as true now as it was back then, to a point. When PlayStation launched a new console, it did so by hiring LA's Dodger Stadium, filling it full of top rock acts and fine chefs and flying over the world's media. Mini Kiss played! I once went to Sydney Opera House to review Massive Attack. (They were very good. Of course they were.) Clarks took me to Japan for the opening of a new shoe shop. Is this ethically right? Almost certainly not. But it was quite the time to have the job I had.

It wasn't just that job. After the recession of the early 1990s, the decade was a boom period of unprecedented economic growth. Work was plentiful, inflation fell and poverty was on the downward curve. Nobody lived anywhere decent — I recall going back to Richard Benson's house after a night out, expecting a home befitting a high-flying style magazine editor, and ending up in some two-room dump in Finsbury Park furnished exclusively by tottering Ikea shelves of CDs. Really, what else did you need back then? No one stayed in anyway. New bars, cool shops and fantastic clubs opened every week. No one went to the gym after work. There weren't any gyms, or at least, none of us knew of them.

The events of 9/11 were in the future. There was a series of wars in the former Yugoslavia, but that felt like something that was happening very far away, with next to no impact on our lives. In London, flash new buildings appeared in Canary Wharf, and the city was granted its own municipal authority. Pretty soon, it would even have its own mayor. It wasn't all fun and games, though. Not every story was a happy one, and not everybody escaped unscathed.

Additional photographs: Getty Images | Shutterstock
Mirrorpix | Press Association Images | Alamy

From top: Brett Anderson of early Britpop band Suede, in 1993; Samuel L Jackson in Quentin Tarantino's sensational 'Pulp Fiction', from 1994; Keith Flint, of world-conquering British dance act The Prodigy, around 1996; CK One, the era's signature unisex scent, was released in 1994; Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker, 1991. Opposite, from top: Björk, 1993; London girl band All Saints, 1995; 'South Park' hit UK screens in 1998

Lad culture was in full swing, and the style press was far from immune. Photographers including Terry Richardson crossed the line from fashion photography into pornography — *The Face* was complicit in publishing some of it but also reported on it, identifying the trend as "fleshion" and spending 3,000 words wondering quite what it all meant. The skincare company Sisley ran a campaign by Richardson that featured women on a farmyard squirting milk into their mouths from cow udders. The 1995 Larry Clark movie *Kids*, written by a 19-year-old Harmony Korine, doesn't look edgy now. It looks tawdry.

Our publisher died of an accidental overdose. His funeral was the first time I'd heard pop music in a church; a stark reflection of his age, his coffin was carried out to Massive Attack's "Unfinished Sympathy". Another member of staff contracted HIV. When we went to see him in hospital, the unspoken understanding was that we were saying goodbye. (He's still going strong today.)

The police were called after a staff member had taken someone back to the office to have sex — they'd fallen off a wall and knocked their teeth out. We made it onto *Crimewatch* when some diamonds for a fashion shoot got nicked. The entire archive of back issues was stolen when it was left in a van by a documentary maker who wanted to make a film about *The Face*.

I was made editor in 1999, and within 18 months had some sort of breakdown of my own — in true of-its-era behaviour, becoming an outpatient at The Priory. As Jarvis Cocker says in the 2003 Britpop documentary *Live Forever*, "You don't often hear people say, 'Oh, since he's been taking them drugs, he's such a nice person!'"

But there were plenty of triumphs. Sending The KLF to report on the Labour Party Conference. Sending Caitlin Moran to report on Saturday morning kids' TV. Sending Post-it notes to as many famous people as we could think of and asking them to send us a doodle back. Kate Moss drew herself naked. Damien Hirst drew a spurting cock. Of course they did.

And missed opportunities, too. Brad Pitt asking to be put on the cover for 1999's *Fight Club*, and us saying we wanted his co-star Edward Norton instead. (Possibly the last time anyone in the media turned down Brad Pitt.) The staff pushing for a new artist called Grayson Perry and me insisting, "We're not doing a fucking potter." The iPod launching with the "1,000 Songs in Your Pocket" adverts and us responding by sticking it "down" in our monthly barometer of things we rated and hated.

"Who likes 1,000 songs?"

IN MANY WAYS, THE DECADE SEEMS A VERY LONG TIME AGO. (It was!) The world at large, and my world, the world of London media, has changed beyond recognition. It's been a good few years since an interview subject offered me drugs. I haven't seen Mini Kiss at many recent events. Clarks is presumably spending its money more wisely than blowing it on business-class flights to Japan for freeloading British journalists.

Even Norman Cook had to dial down the hospitality in the end. People had started doing lines off the railway tracks at the back of his house; one of them was rushed to hospital with his hair standing on end and his clothes on fire.

So, 90s revivalists: don't say you haven't been warned. ○

The unknown soldier

PRIVATE SG LEWIS WAS THE YOUNGEST BRITISH SOLDIER TO FIGHT IN WORLD WAR I. HE WAS 12 WHEN HE SIGNED UP, 13 WHEN HE TOOK PART IN THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME — EXTRAORDINARY FACTS UNTIL RECENTLY UNKNOWN TO HIS GREAT NEPHEW, ESQUIRE EDITOR-AT-LARGE TIM LEWIS. BUT WHO WAS SID LEWIS? AND, MORE TO THE POINT, WHAT WERE HIS PARENTS THINKING? AND WHAT CAN BE GAINED FROM UNCOVERING LONG-BURIED FAMILY HISTORY?

British soldiers go 'over the top' to attack the German trenches during WW1, somewhere in France, June 1916

ON A WEDNESDAY NIGHT IN JUNE 1915, a mob of 600 locals gathered outside P Jung's bakery on Tooting High Street in south London. Peter Jung, a German émigré who had long ago become a naturalised British citizen, had opened the shop in 1900 and it was famed locally for delicacies such as apple strudels and Viennese whirls. Earlier in the war, hungry kids would be sent there with pillowcases to fill up with free leftover buns. Jung's son was fighting for the British Army.

But now the mood had changed. Jung pulled the blinds on the store, which was at the base of a large domed, red-brick building with an attractive glass front, just before the windows were smashed by bricks and stones. Jung and his family escaped by clambering over neighbouring rooftops as the looting began. The crowd was dispersed by police at 11pm, before reassembling at Grunhardt's bakery further down the high street, then Borghorst's bakery. Newspapers did not necessarily condemn these actions, which were commonplace that summer wherever German expats lived, especially in London: the *Balham Gazette* urged the people of Tooting to seek out bakers "with British blood in their veins".

As 1915 rolled on, the war was not going well — certainly not for the Allies, anyway. Britain had joined the conflict the previous August and there was a popular conception, on both sides, that it would be short and sharp: Emperor Wilhelm II told the German soldiers that they would be home "before the leaves start falling". By the time of the raid on Jung's bakery, it was becoming clear that the war would be shattering and all-consuming. It had become "total".

At 53 Defoe Road in Tooting, little more than a stone's throw from P Jung's bakery, lived 12-year-old Sidney Lewis. A smart kid, tall with dark brown hair, cut short at the sides and longer on top, he was on a junior scholarship at Broadwater Road School. Walking to school, he might have passed the poster of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, with his walrus moustache and giant, accusatory finger: "Your Country Needs YOU". On the buses, "White Feather Girls" theatrically handed out white feathers of cowardice to men wearing civilian clothes. At home that summer of 1915, the Lewis family would get — increasingly dispiriting — updates from the *Daily Mirror*: the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*, the Second Battle of Ypres, where the Germans unleashed poison gas for the first time. They would read the news one day, then cut it up for toilet paper the next.

The British Army was now facing an existential problem: "wastage". In the first flushes of the war, more than a million men volunteered. By mid-1915, very simply, more men were dying than enlisting: the Army needed to recruit 35,000 men a week to keep its operations running, but by September, only 16,500 were putting themselves forward.

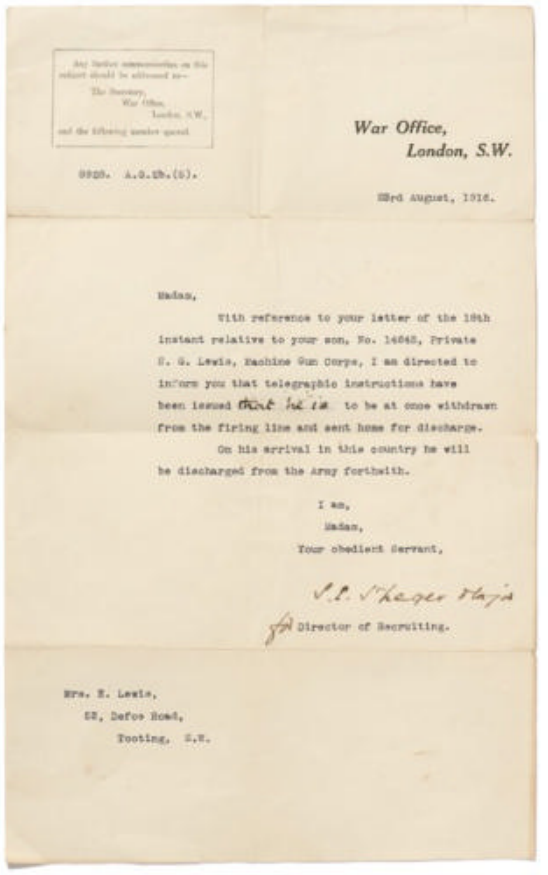
Sid, as everyone called him, had four brothers and two sisters. They shared three bedrooms with their parents Fanny and Edward, an attendant at a lunatic asylum. Sid's brother Will signed up with the East Surrey Regiment at the outset of the war, which made a bit more space in the house. It was chaotic, but Sid had a lot of freedom. Certainly no one seems to have noticed when, on 9 August 1915, he travelled a couple of miles to Wimbledon and walked into a recruiting centre. He told the officer that he was a tailor and 19 years old. They checked his height, a nudge under 5ft 6in, and his weight, 51 kilos.

And that was it: Sid was now a soldier in the British Army. On that day in August 1915, he was 12 years and four months. In less than a year, aged 13, he would find himself with the Machine Gun Corps on the Somme, in a godforsaken wood in Northern France that another British soldier called "easily the worst place on earth". His story would then be forgotten for almost a century.

Left: the 18 September 1916 edition of the Daily Mirror, which ran a photograph of Sidney Lewis in his uniform

THE FIRST TIME I HEARD ABOUT SID, MY GREAT-UNCLE — I don't think his name had ever come up before — was during one of the Covid lockdowns. My dad had been contacted through an ancestry website by Susan, a long-lost second cousin in Canada, who asked him what he knew about Sidney Lewis. Sid was my dad's uncle: he was a sergeant on the Surrey police force who later ran a pub, the George Inn at Frant, near Tunbridge Wells. He died in 1969, aged 66. My dad used to see Sid quite regularly at birthdays and other gatherings when he was growing up and remembered him as "a storyteller", which

AGED 13, HE WOULD FIND HIMSELF ON THE SOMME, IN A WOOD THAT ANOTHER BRITISH SOLDIER CALLED 'EASILY THE WORST PLACE ON EARTH'



War Office,
London, S.W.

8th August, 1916.

Madam,

With reference to your letter of the 18th instant relative to your son, No. 14645, Private S. G. Lewis, Machine Gun Corps, I am directed to inform you that telegraphic instructions have been issued that he is to be at once withdrawn from the firing line and sent home for discharge.

On his arrival in this country he will be discharged from the Army forthwith.

I am,
Madam,
Your obedient Servant,

J. E. Shager Khan
for Director of Recruiting.

Mrs. E. Lewis,
[illegible], Defoe Road,
Tooting, S.W.

Right: the War Office response to the letter written by Fanny Lewis, Sid's mother, authorising her son's immediate discharge

is not necessarily a compliment in my family.

What my dad didn't know — and in fact, for a long time no one did — was that Sid had served in World War I. Apparently Sid had mentioned it during his lifetime, but, the curse of the raconteur, no one took him seriously. Sid would have been too young: officially, you had to be 18 years old to sign up for the Army; 19 to serve overseas. Confirmation of Sid's story would only come almost 100 years after he enlisted, in 2012. The historian Richard van Emden wrote an article to promote his new book, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, for the *Mail on Sunday*. The *Mail* spiked it, but it found its way into the *Sunday People*. In the article, van Emden noted that the youngest soldier involved in the conflict was almost certainly Private SG Lewis, No 14645, but that in more than 20 years of researching the topic he hadn't been able to locate him.

Colin Lewis, Sid's only child and my dad's cousin, happened to see the article. He looked through his dad's effects and noticed, for the first time, there was paperwork relating to his years in service that backed up his tall tales. Van Emden, in a follow-up article, pronounced that a "century-old mystery had been solved". In 2013, the Imperial War Museum verified that Sid was the youngest-known British soldier to serve overseas in the Great War. In September 2016, almost 100 years to the day after he returned from France, a blue plaque was placed on the house in Defoe Road, Tooting, which is now 934 Garratt Lane.

"Because we're known for covering World War I, we get a lot of people who contact us with various claims," Anthony Richards, the head of documents at the Imperial War Museum, tells me. "So people will say, 'Oh, my father was the youngest soldier ever.' And that might be the family story, but there's no evidence that ever happened. They are usually based on a nugget of truth that often gets elaborations added over the years. But in this case, there's no doubt that it's true. And that's quite unusual. There are no arguments."

When my dad sent me the email in November 2020, even though I couldn't have picked Sid out of a line-up, I felt weirdly pleased, even proud. My father had done some pretty diligent digging into our family tree before, but our relatives either seemed to do boring jobs (domestic staff or linen dealers) or the most reprehensible ones (slave trading). I watched a YouTube video of the day that Sid's blue plaque was unveiled. Hundreds of people turned up outside an unremarkable Victorian terraced house: there were speeches, and a violinist played tunes from the era. Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, posed for a photograph with the plaque. At one point, a kid — about the same age Sid was when he was serving — came out dressed in vintage army uniform, and there was an audible gasp from the crowd.

This was the power of the story. All of us know a 12-year-old: they are our children, our nieces and nephews. They are handy to have around if you get stuck on *Rocket League*, but they are uniquely useless in actual adversity, let alone stuck in a trench with a German soldier attacking them with a studded club. When Sid signed up in August 1915, he was tall for his age, but in the only photograph that exists from that time, a posed shot that shows him army fatigues with a whisper of hair above his top lip, he is very much a child.

Sid's parents, my great-grandparents, appeared to have little idea that he had enlisted and certainly no clue that he was on the Western Front. It was more than a year before they did anything about it. At this point, Fanny, Sid's mother, wrote to the War Office, seemingly outraged, demanding that her son be demobbed. Sid eventually returned to Tooting in late September 1916, after 13 months of service. But his adventures did not end there: later in the war, he re-enlisted with the Machine Gun Corps, still only 15 years old and technically underage, and was part of the Army of Occupation in Austria at the end of the conflict in 1919. Then, when World War II rolled around, Sid volunteered to be part of a bomb-disposal unit.

All told, Sid lived quite a life. But there were questions, so many questions. What sort of parents fail to notice that their 12-year-old son is missing for a year? Boys that age do spend a lot of time in their rooms, but still. A year. What impact did serving in the war have on a child who had only just become a teenager? More than that, though, there was something enigmatic about Sid. Here was a man who lived through and survived the most extraordinary upheaval and his experiences would have been forgotten forever had an article in the *Sunday People* — the *Sunday People*! — not jogged his son's memory.

It seemed bizarre to me that someone with such an outsized life could have figured so little in the family to which he belonged, which also happened to be mine. That I was only just finding out about him when my father and Colin were in their eighties and I myself was middle-aged. Is this just what families do? Spend so much time on the small stuff that the big stuff slips away? What could I learn about Sid while there was still time? Or was I already too late?

NOT ONLY DID SID FIGHT IN THE GREAT WAR, I soon discovered he was embroiled in some of its most famous and gruesome exchanges. At some point in 1915, Sid transferred from the East Surrey Regiment to 106 Company, Machine Gun Corps. This might have been because he was a crack shot, but like so much with Sid, we will never know for sure: he left no diaries and seems scarcely to have told a soul about those years.

The Machine Gun Corps disembarked in Le Havre on 27 April 1916 and went straight into operation in the British offensive near Festubert in May. At the end of June, the company moved on to the Somme regions, then to Delville Wood in mid-July. Even in the midst of a relentlessly attritional conflict, "Devil's Wood", as the British renamed it, is often singled out as being especially brutal. It ended in victory for the Allies, but came at a terrible price: at the start of the →

Previous pages: Getty Images. This page and opposite: Crown/IWM, Mirrorpix

campaign, there were 3,155 South African soldiers; six days later, 2,536 of them, or 80 per cent of the original force, were dead, wounded or missing. German snipers hid in the trees, so a grand forest was reduced to stumps, with only a solitary hornbeam left standing.

"I don't want to tell anyone about it," Captain SJ Worsley, a 19-year-old in the North Staffordshire regiment, wrote about Delville Wood. "There was hand-to-hand fighting with knives, bombs, and bayonets; cursing and brutality on both sides such as men can be responsible for when it is a question of 'your life or mine'; mud and filthy stench; dysentery and unattended wounds; shortage of food and water and ammunition."

An account from the German side of Delville Wood was perhaps even more visceral. "A wasteland of shattered trees, charred and burning stumps, craters thick with mud and blood, and corpses, corpses everywhere," one officer wrote. "In places they were piled four deep. Worst of all was the lowing of the wounded. It sounded like a cattle ring at the spring fair."

It was no place for a 13-year-old; no place for anyone, really. Sid's son Colin is adamant that his father's parents, Edward and Fanny, were oblivious to his whereabouts. "My grandparents had no idea where he had gone," he says. "They must have been worried sick when dad disappeared." The first they heard about it, Colin thinks, was August 1916, when a comrade of Sid's came home to Tooting on leave, stopped by Defoe Road, and told them where Sid was, prompting his mother to write the letter demanding his discharge.

All this is certainly plausible, but Richard van Emden is dubious. He believes Sid's parents knew full well that he had signed up for the Army, perhaps even encouraged it. As a soldier, he would get three meals a day, be outdoors and active, and do his duty to defend the country. They might have felt that Sid was clearly too young to be sent overseas, so would remain in the UK, maybe even somewhere safer than Tooting. What might have been news to them was that Sid was, in fact, at the Somme. "I suspect that there was an element of, 'Oh my god, have you seen these casualty figures? Right, we're getting him out now!'" says van Emden. "So, I'm sure his mother knew where he was. I'm certain she didn't think, 'He's absconded and gone to work on a farm in Scotland.' But it's nothing I can prove."

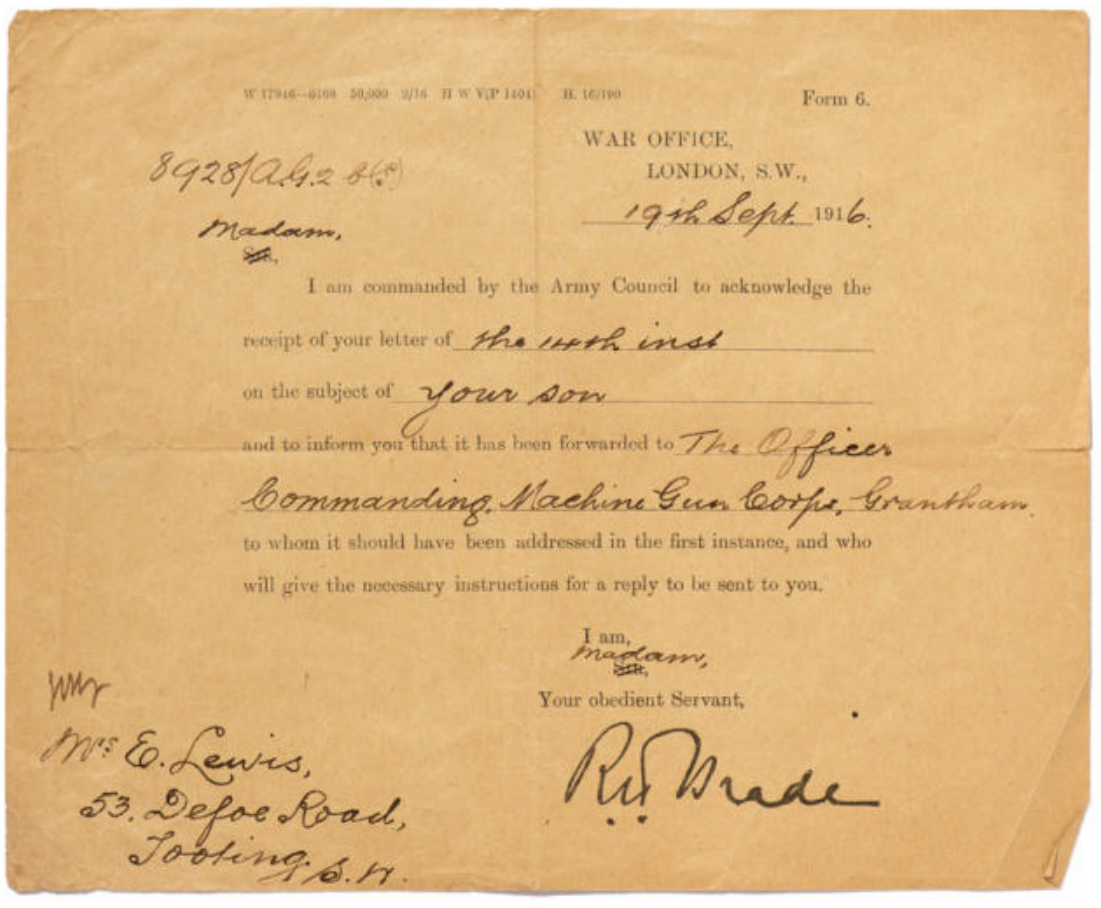
The only solace for Sid and his parents, should they have chosen to see it that way, was that he and the many thousands of other underage soldiers — van Emden has calculated that around 250,000 enlisted in the British Army during World War I — did make a difference. "If you had withdrawn every single underage soldier from France in 1915, we would have lost the war," says van Emden, plainly. "There were too many of them."

Sid didn't exactly receive a hero's welcome when he came home from France, or after being part of the Allied occupation of Austria in 1919. Britain had gone heavily into debt during the Great War, and there was soaring unemployment: when the census of 1921 came round, Sid was 18, still living at home and an out-of-work carpenter. Finally, in the mid-1920s, his life began to take shape. In 1925, he took a job with the police in Guildford, Surrey. Around the same time, he met Ivy Bardell, who lived in Balham, two stops up from Tooting Broadway on the new Northern Line. They were married in 1927 and in 1933, their only child, Colin, was born.

If what happened on the Somme when he was a teenager stayed with Sid — and how could it not? — he never let on. Or maybe, he was never asked. But, even at the time, there were concerns about the long-term psychological effects of the conflict. Philip Gibbs, one of five official British reporters during World War I, wrote specifically about those who survived Delville Wood — the name of which was now an "evil spell". According to Gibbs: "The ghostliness of the place left its mark on the minds of men who were not troubled much by the sights of battle. Many would wince at the mention of Delville Wood. Those slashed trees, naked trenches, smoking shell holes, and charred timber, intermingled with bloodstained bundles, once held life, and now make a nightmare."

Colin isn't sure how much his father was damaged mentally by his teenage endeavours. Over the years, though, he has started to wonder if he might have been embarrassed by them. Or at least, felt that he had brought shame on his parents, by disappearing and then having to be dragged back home. "Nobody ever talked about it in the family," he recalls. "He was considered a little bit of a black sheep. He'd been wrong to do it. So they wouldn't even mention it."

TO TRY AND MAKE SENSE OF SID'S DISAPPEARANCE, I arrange to visit the house where Sid and my own grandfather grew up, in the company of



W 17946—6108 50,000 2/16 H W V(P 1404) H. 16/199 Form 6.

WAR OFFICE,
LONDON, S.W.,
19th Sept. 1916.

8928/A&G 8(c)

Madam,

I am commanded by the Army Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst on the subject of your son and to inform you that it has been forwarded to The Officer Commanding, Machine Gun Corps, Grantham to whom it should have been addressed in the first instance, and who will give the necessary instructions for a reply to be sent to you.

I am,
Madam,
Your obedient Servant,
R. V. Brade

Mrs E. Lewis,
53. Defoe Road,
Tooting. S.W.

Above: further communication from the War Office, acknowledging Mrs Lewis' regarding her son's enlistment

Crown/IWM, Courtesy of Colin Lewis

‘IF YOU HAD WITHDRAWN EVERY SINGLE UNDERAGE SOLDIER FROM FRANCE, WE WOULD HAVE LOST’

Below: a grown-up Sid photographed with his wife Ivy

Geoff Simmons, a member of the local history group. My hypothesis was that Tooting would have been a forlorn spot, and their home a poky, claustrophobic one, with nine of them crammed into three bedrooms. A place he had to escape, at almost any cost. But, in 2022 at least, the house is rather pleasant. The current owner, a graphic designer called Gilly, has painted the interior white and knocked through some walls. It feels open, even spacious. There’s a big garden at the back, dominated by a large cherry tree that Sid’s parents might have planted.

“What a time to grow up in Tooting,” marvels Geoff, as we walk between Sid’s house and the school that he — and my grandfather Edgar, six years his junior — went to. “When Sid was a child, there were suddenly half-a-dozen cinemas, a new library and Tooting Lido, one of the biggest open-air pools in Europe; all kinds of openings. It’s a very attractive proposition.”

My final appointment is in early March at the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth, south London. Sarah Paterson, the curator for World War I, arranged for the papers relating to Sid, which Colin donated to the museum and are kept in climactically sensitive conditions at the museum’s outpost in Duxford, near Cambridge, to be brought to London. Paterson books the Dome, a dramatic, light-filled circular room that used to be the chapel of the Bethlem Royal Hospital, for the unveiling. The documents are collected in a grey A4 folder with “SG Lewis” written on the outside in pencil and tied with a white ribbon, a gratifyingly theatrical touch.

It is an unsettling time to be at a museum dedicated to exploring the impact of conflict. Russian troops have recently crossed the border into Ukraine, and the Ukrainians have been forced into a desperate rearguard defence, with men and women of all ages enlisting to fight. The same day that I visit the Imperial War Museum, the BBC’s Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen tweets a photograph of four teenagers: “18 year old Ukrainian volunteers off to war in Kyiv. Three days training and they will be on the front line.” It is shocking, and many people, rightly, are shocked. But you also do not have to look very hard for more examples of too-young soldiers. A 12-year-old American, Calvin Graham, enlisted with the US Navy in World War II. The Balkan Wars of the 1990s had participants as young as 10. A 2017 report for the United Nations found that children were involved in 14 conflicts around the globe in 2016, from Afghanistan to Yemen. Evidently, I have been naïve to believe that Sid was an anomaly.

I pull the ribbon and open the folder. Most of the documents are already familiar to me, having been reproduced in books and articles. There’s a copy of Sid’s birth certificate, the letter from the Army Council via the War Office authorising his withdrawal from France, the clipping from page four of the *Daily Mirror* from 18 September 1916 that has a photograph of Sid under the headline “Joined at Twelve”.

It is this newspaper article that feels the most poignant: it’s no more than 100 words long, and makes no moral commentary on Sid’s decision to enlist, but I imagine it must have been pretty thrilling for a 13-year-old to find himself written about in a national newspaper. The pages are yellowing now, and so frail that they have to be kept inside a plastic sleeve. Sid must have been proud enough of the story that he kept it safe throughout his life: for the rest of his childhood, his 30-odd years in the police, another decade in the pub. He held onto it, and saved it for his son, Colin.

It occurs to me, not for the first time, that families can be such odd, impenetrable units: the way intimacy can breed disinterest, and even apathy; and the giant holes that come to exist in the middle of them. How, as children and young adults, we have zero interest in the internal or external lives of our parents, until one day we notice how little we know and how quickly time is passing, and we just have to hope that our parents are around and clear-minded enough to fill in the gaps.

There was nothing inevitable about Sid’s story coming to light. Richard van Emden is the only historian who has looked into underage soldiers with serious intent. He might not have written that article. The *Sunday People* — the *Sunday People*! — might not have picked it up. Colin might not have read it. Would that have even mattered? I can’t claim it would have been the most dramatic or poignant example of sliding doors, but I, for one, am glad that these precarious strands, so easily broken, have survived. In the process, I have learned a lot about Great Uncle Sid, of course, but also my grandfather, who died when I was 11, and always seemed so austere and forbidding. Even my own father, with whom I talked for hours about the outdoor toilet at Defoe Road and a story that Sid had told in what must have been the late 1940s, about a man — whom he was presumably arresting — who was as mad as a box of frogs but could paint a perfectly straight line, by hand and eye, on the side of a car.

Clearly, Colin would give anything to have one last conversation with his dad about the Great War, about Delville Wood, about a magnificent forest reduced to stumps. Or just to ask Sid what he was thinking when, at the age of 12, he looked at the poster of Kitchener’s admonitory finger, or whether he had even seen the poster at all. “I felt really ashamed later on when I realised he had actually been there, what he’d done and everything,” Colin says. “And I’d really not paid any attention.” He gives a wry laugh: “I thought he was just spinning me a line.” ○

STREET STYLE Stride into summer with the season’s finest footwear

Photographs by Matt Hind Fashion by Charlie Teasdale

Opposite: green fabric sandals, £630; green linen trousers, £460, both by Fendi
Below: multicoloured nylon-calfskin-suede trainers, £675; white cotton socks, £70, both by Dolce & Gabbana

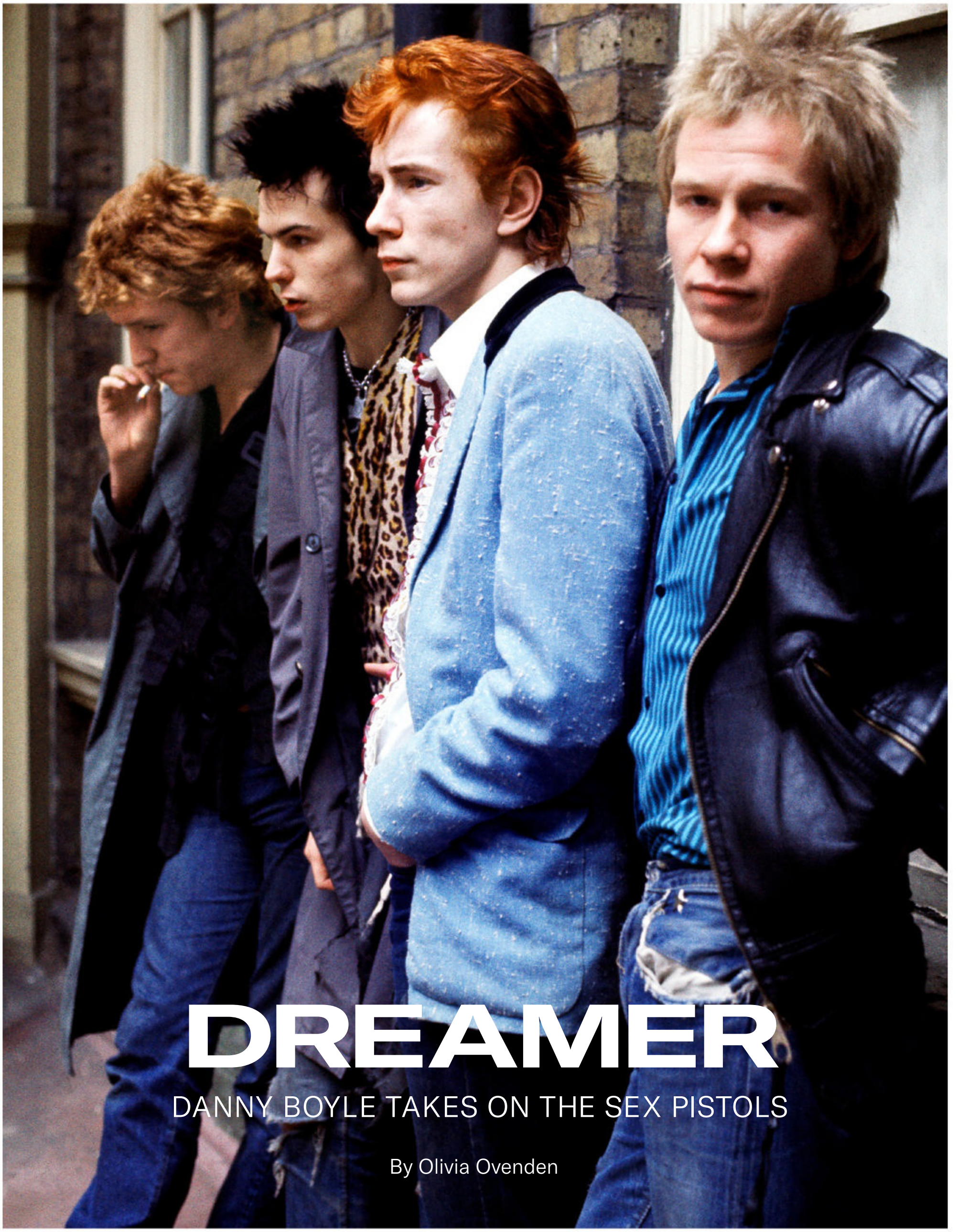
Below: black leather loafers, £279; black wool trousers, £229, both by Tiger of Sweden
Opposite: navy suede boat shoes, £400; blue floral-print denim jeans, £300, both by Paul Smith

Opposite: red suede moccasins, £605; brown cotton trousers, £720, both by Loro Piana
Below: black leather moccasins, £1,485, by Salvatore Ferragamo

Photographer's sssistant: Stewart Capper | Model: Kojo Hammond @ First MGT

Danny Boyle photographed by Rachel Louise Brown, exclusively for Esquire, March 2022.
Opposite: The Sex Pistols photographed by Adrian Boot during a Glitterbest photoshoot near London's Oxford Street, 1977

ENGLAND'S



DREAMER

DANNY BOYLE TAKES ON THE SEX PISTOLS

By Olivia Ovenden

From left: Toby Wallace as Steve Jones, Louis Partridge as Sid Vicious, Anson Boon as Johnny Rotten and Jacob Slater as Paul Cook in the upcoming TV series 'Pistol'

IN FEBRUARY 1976, AT THE DAWN OF PUNK, 19-year-old Danny Boyle was at university in Bangor, North Wales, studying English and drama. His first inkling that something — something big — was happening elsewhere was a write-up in the *NME* of a performance by a new band at The Marquee Club in Soho, London, at which a chair was hurled across the room. "Well I didn't think they sounded *that* bad on first earful — then I saw it was the singer who'd done the throwing," wrote the critic Neil Spencer.

The band in question was the Sex Pistols, who would go on to define the look, the sound and the attitude of one of the most important and influential movements in British pop culture. Punk arrived, as Boyle tells it, in the nick of time.

"Britain back then was stultifying, in a way that you cannot imagine," says Boyle, now 65 and one of Britain's most popular and successful film directors. "You were young and then you were old, and there was nothing in between. The Pistols said, 'Fuck that'. They blew that apart. The country genuinely did shake. There was terror about our children pushing safety pins through their nose and spitting at each other, wearing see-through clothes and bondage."

In 1977, when Boyle and his friends finally got their hands on the band's one and only album, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, they "played it to death". But by the time Boyle made it to London in 1978 — to work in theatre, later becoming deputy director of the prestigious Royal Court — the Sex Pistols had already split up, self-destructing on a tour of America. Punk, at least its first wave, had crashed. But the Sex Pistols' brief moment of infamy proved to be a turning point for Boyle: in his breakthrough film, 1994's *Shallow Grave*, a charmingly depraved story of a flat-share gone wrong, and his electrifying, generation-defining follow-up, 1996's *Trainspotting*, the DIY spirit and irreverent ethos of punk are unmistakable.

"I love movies, but it was always music more than anything that drove me," he says, with the cheerful energy that he is known for and with which his films — even the darkest ones — are often infected. (By way of trademarks, see also: killer soundtracks, which have featured Iggy Pop, Blondie, Sigur Rós, MIA, Nina Simone and, most memorably of all, in *Trainspotting* and its follow-up *T2*, the British electronic-music duo Underworld.) Boyle, with his familiar square-framed glasses, high forehead and bushy, quizzical eyebrows, grins as regularly as he takes a breath; or maybe, given that he talks at 100 miles an hour, even more. "I've always been much more that person than the auteur film-making kind."

He is telling me this in the glassy top-floor meeting room of a post-production house on Chancery Lane in central London. It is here that he is grading his new project, *Pistol*, a six-part series about the formation of the Sex Pistols, adapted from *Lonely Boy*, the eye-wateringly candid autobiography of the band's guitarist, Steve Jones. For someone as steeped in punk lore as Boyle, describing it as a "passion project" doesn't even come close.

The new series, which starts on Disney+ in May and is written by frequent Baz Luhrmann collaborator Craig Pearce, is Boyle's first major TV project after a career dominated by film-making. It is not, however, his first attempt at a punk-memoir adaptation: he had planned — until she changed her mind — to direct a film version of the 2014 autobiography by Viv Albertine of The Slits, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys* ("the best title of a book ever"). Nevertheless, the Sex Pistols' short lifespan gives this series a contained structure — and an end point — that the director found appealing; no six-season run for this one. "We didn't want it to become soapy," Boyle says. "It's two years, one album and 12 songs. That's it."

Pistol stars predominantly unknown and first-time actors: Anson Boon as frontman John Lydon, better known as Johnny Rotten; Louis Partridge as Sid Vicious; Christian Lees as Glen Matlock, the bassist sacked to make way for Vicious; Jacob Slater as drummer Paul Cook; and Toby Wallace as Jones. It's something that has worked well for Boyle in the past: Ewan McGregor in *Shallow Grave*; a little-known Cillian Murphy in zombie-apocalypse thriller *28 Days Later*; Dev Patel making his feature-film debut in the feel-good rags-to-riches drama *Slumdog Millionaire*. There's an appeal, says Boyle, to actors who "don't carry anything yet".

The show also features portrayals of a smattering of the band's associates and punk icons, from Chrissie Hynde and Siouxsie Sioux to Pistols Svengali Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, whose King's Road boutique, Sex, was responsible for the slashes and the safety pins. Boyle brought in a number of the real figures — including Jones, Cook and Hynde — as advisers, although not everyone, he says, was keen at first. When he initially approached Westwood, now Dame Vivienne, to give some insight into the period, she offered the unimprovable response: "I'm not really interested in the past."

Lydon, true to form, refused to be involved, to the extent that Cook and Jones had to sue him to get permission to use the Pistols' music in the series. After losing the case in August last year, Lydon issued a statement in which he expressed fears that the show would "water down and distort the true history of the Sex Pistols". Boyle seems unfazed. "I met Lydon once, and I like him very much, despite all the court cases. →

'BRITAIN IN THE 1970S WAS STULTIFYING, IN A WAY YOU CANNOT IMAGINE. THE PISTOLS BLEW THAT APART'

Miya Mizuno/FX

John complains we didn't approach him. We did approach him, and I would have loved to have him involved, but you're never going to in a million years."

Pistol arrives, as its makers surely know, at an interesting moment. The punk summer of 1977 was Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, soundtracked by the Pistols' "God save the Queen". This summer, we celebrate another jubilee. And, just as Britain was mired in political and economic disquiet then, so it is now. "I don't know if it was directly political," Boyle says of the show's auspicious timing. "If I'm being brutally honest, I think it was more to do with my age and ability to get it made. I wanted to do punk because it was the big formative experience for me, and it's overshadowed everything I've done."

THAT DANNY BOYLE SHOULD HAVE EMERGED during the punk era is not surprising given his age and background. He was born in Radcliffe, north of Manchester, in 1956, to Irish Catholic parents — his mother Annie, known as "Babs", worked as a dinner lady at his school, and his father Frank at Kearsley Power Station — and was one of three children, with a younger sister, Bernadette, and a twin, Marie. He now has three grown-up children of his own with his former partner, Gail Stevens, a casting director, and lives in Mile End, east London.

It is perhaps more surprising given his output, which seems in some ways to espouse the opposite of the punk ethos: to search for warmth and humanity in the bleakest situations. *Trainspotting*, named by the BFI as the 10th best film of the 20th century, may have a grim premise — a group of heroin addicts in 1980s Edinburgh trying, kind of, to get clean — but it is also a rousing story of adolescent larking-about, young lust and enduring friendship. With *Slumdog Millionaire*, which won eight awards at the 2009 Oscars, he found light in the dark story of a young Indian boy pinballed from one cruelty to another, choreographing it into a sprawling and optimistic yarn about life and luck. There aren't many people who could make a fun film about someone sawing his own arm off, or a biopic of a technocrat without making audiences want to do the same, but Boyle could, and indeed did, with 2010's *127 Hours* and 2015's *Steve Jobs* respectively.

He is also a wonderful chronicler of Britishness, using the lens of pop culture to tackle big topics of national identity in fun and subversive ways. Take, for example, his most recent film, 2019's *Yesterday*, a romantic comedy written by Richard Curtis which imagined a world in which only one person — a struggling musician, no less! — could remember, and capitalise on, the music of the Beatles. This talent has not gone unnoticed outside of the film world. In 2012, Boyle was asked to oversee the opening ceremony of the London Olympics. The spectacle he devised, called *Isles of Wonder*, put Shakespeare and the Spice Girls proudly side-by-side, and portrayed everything from the "dark satanic mills" of the industrial revolution to NHS hospital beds, magicked into giant trampolines.

Ten years on, with the country reeling from the successive blows of austerity, Brexit, Covid and war in Europe, his jubilant vision of Britain must feel to him, if not unrecognisable, then at least distant. He isn't swayed. "What we were trying to express," he says, of the 2012 ceremony, "was something about the nature of our society, which is basically a decent one, with all of its faults. I think that holds, personally."

AS MUCH AS HIS FILMS, THE SUCCESS OF THE 2012 opening ceremony — which climaxed with the ultimate celebrity coup: Daniel Craig as James Bond appearing to skydive into the stadium with HRH The Queen — cemented Boyle as a beloved figure in British cultural life. That same year, he was featured alongside iconic Brits including Grayson Perry and Kate Moss in a re-imagining of the *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover by its original artist Sir Peter Blake. Whether he liked it or not, "national treasure" status was in the air. But there was still a bit of punk left in him: soon after the Olympics, he was offered a knighthood, which he refused. "I thought it was very insensitive of them to ask me, to be honest," he says, still tickled. "And I never leaked it — fucking Mark Lawson blurted it out [during a BBC Radio Four interview in 2012]. I remember people saying, 'Oh, you should accept it on behalf of all the [volunteers who worked on the ceremony]', and that sort of thing just makes me vomit. It's literally a way of separating yourself."

'PUNK WAS THE BIG FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ME, AND IT'S OVERSHADOWED EVERYTHING I'VE DONE'

In his film work too, and even quite recently, Boyle has been known to run up against the establishment. In 2018, he signed on to direct the 25th Bond film with his long-standing screenwriting partner John Hodge, reuniting him with Craig for what would be the actor's final outing as 007. This partnership, though, was to be less successful than the sky-diving-with-The-Queen stunt: *No Time To Die* — or "The Most Cursed Bond Movie in History", as it may well be remembered due to the injury Craig sustained while filming and the premiere being pushed back three times — was eventually released last year, long after Boyle and Hodge had stepped away from the project. The rumour was that Boyle walked because he had wanted Bond to die and producer Barbara Broccoli's Eon Productions wasn't having it. Anyone who has now seen *No Time To Die* will know this cannot be true. So, what happened?

Clockwise from top left: Dev Patel in Danny Boyle's 'Slumdog Millionaire' (2008), which won eight Oscars including Best Film; Cillian Murphy in the presciently apocalyptic '28 Days Later' (2002); Ewan McGregor in the era-defining 'Trainspotting' (1996)

Shutterstock

"I remember thinking, 'Should I really get involved in franchises?' Because they don't really want something different," Boyle says. "They want you to freshen it up a bit, but not really challenge it, and we wanted to do something different with it. Weirdly — it would have been very topical now — it was all set in Russia, which is of course where Bond came from, out of the Cold War. It was set in present-day Russia and went back to his origins, and they just lost, what's the word… they just lost confidence in it." He pauses to look me in the eye. "It was a shame really."

Boyle has seen *No Time To Die* and is in favour of its surprising conclusion, but he does begrudge one thing about how he parted ways with the franchise. "The idea that they used in a different way was the one of [James Bond's] child, which [Hodge] introduced [and which] was wonderful," he said. Is there any prospect of him returning for a future Bond instalment? "I don't think so," he says with a soft smile. Still, he talks excitedly about the prospect of an actor like Paapa Essiedu (*I May Destroy You*), whom he had seen in a play at the Old Vic a few nights previously, taking on the role, before attesting, as he has before, that "[Robert] Pattinson would be a great Bond", should he be willing to trade in the keys to the Batmobile for the DB5.

Perhaps getting caught up in the machine, as he did with Bond, is a mode of working to which Boyle is not fundamentally suited. He has spoken previously about the shock to the system he felt while making the 2000 film *The Beach*, adapted from Alex Garland's novel of the same name, and starring a young Leonardo DiCaprio. As a director who had been used to making smaller indie films and getting his hands dirty, with limitless resources at his disposal he suddenly felt like a spare part. "I'm much better under the radar a bit," he told *The New York Times* in 2007, "and actually figuring out how to make things work." (Despite mediocre reviews, the film still made about £111m on a £38m budget.)

Pistol, then — a drama about a group of scrappy adolescents with something to prove, played by a bunch of young actors in a similar position — should be a return to the kind of film-making Boyle enjoys (depending, of course, on the relative freedoms or restrictions of shooting it for a mega-studio like Disney). In telling the story of a band who crashed and burned, and of what endured in the popular consciousness after the embers went out, Boyle can once again reflect ideas about what Britain is back at us, for better or for worse: to look into the gutter, but search for the glint.

"I tried to let *Pistol* have a freedom that was unpredictable," he says with a chuckle. "But I think there is some truth in the idea that you do always make the same thing again and again and again." Given the consistency and popularity of his output, you might consider that no bad thing and, after 30 years in the business, Boyle has settled on an approach to his work that is, like the man himself, both cheerful and sanguine: "I'm very optimistic about everything except success."

If there is one idea that has guided him over the years, he says, it is the importance of looking outwards. It was a principle instilled in him early on in his career, and has served him well. "When I worked at the Royal Court, it had a very arrogant attitude toward the audience," he says of his time at the London theatre. "It wasn't part of our job to make it attractive to these people, it was their job to appreciate it and turn up for this glorious piece of art. I've tried to do the opposite [since]: I think it is your absolute obligation to work as ruthlessly as you can to make the story you want to tell appealing, and I have that in my bones." ○

'Pistol' premieres on Disney+ on 31 May

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN MCALISTER

MARKET

LEATHER-TRIMMED CANVAS BACKPACK, £2,700, BRUNELLO CUCINELLI

BACKPACKS

1

2

6

7

3

5

4

1. GUCCI, £870 2. SNOW PEAK, £145 3. PRADA @ MATCHESFASHION, £1,375 4. LOUIS VUITTON, £2,2905. 5. ALPHATAURI, £179
6. PAUL SMITH + PORTER, £465 7. BOTTEGA VENETA @ MATCHESFASHION, £1,140

CAMERAS

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

1. RICOH GR III, £840 2. FUJIFILM INSTAX MINI EVO, £195 3. CANON POWERSHOT G1 X III, £1,159 4. CANON POWERSHOT G7 X MARK III, £700
5. LEICA Q2 MONOCHROM, £5,050 6. FUJIFILM X-T30, £849 7. SONY ZV-1, £700

FUJIFILM X100V
CAMERA, £1,580

ROTHAUS TANNENZÄPFLE,
£2.57/330ML

LAGER

1. MODELO, £1.91/355ML 2. AUGUSTINER PILS, £2.60/330ML 3. QUILMES, £2.14/340ML 4. VICTORIA MALAGA, £1.93/330ML 5. PERONI RED, £1.97/330ML
6. BROOKLYN LAGER, £2.69/330ML 7. ANCHOR CALIFORNIA LAGER, £2.65/355ML 8. KEO LAGER, £1.93/330ML

SWEATSHIRTS

1

2

7

3

6

4

5

1. HERNO, £190 2. AMI @ MATCHESFASHION, £165 3. TIGER OF SWEDEN, £139 4. DOLCE & GABBANA @ MATCHESFASHION, £575
5. SUNSPEL, £120 6. RALPH LAUREN, £135 7. ISABEL MARANT @ MATCHESFASHION, £220

COTTON-JERSEY
SWEATSHIRT, £370, BODE
@ MATCHESFASHION

STEEL SUNGLASSES,
£263, GIORGIO ARMANI

SUNGLASSES

1. RHUDE @ MR PORTER, £390 2. SALVATORE FERRAGAMO, £259 3. CUBITTS @ MR PORTER, £125 4. CHIMI, £110
5. OAKLEY, £167 6. MONCLER + GENTLE MONSTER, £230 7. FENDI @ MR PORTER, £380 8. DIOR, £410

THE

FICTION

AQUIFER

GILES FODEN

FICTION

186

WHEN CAPTAIN XIN'S JEEP PULLED UP OUTSIDE ALICE'S BUNGALOW, at the time his messenger had specified, it was followed by a diesel-chugging truck. In the back of this: six of his soldiers, along with some water, tents, fuel and other provisions for the journey. Xin knocked on the door.

Alice emerged, carrying a small rucksack containing her maps and a few necessaries. She felt excited at the prospect of the trip — something happening at last, after the mixture of torpor and fruitless encounters with South African and Chinese authorities that her time on the island had so far brought. After months of asking, Xin had at last, with an expression she couldn't quite read, agreed to help her.

She walked alongside him to the Jeep. He was wearing the same light-brown uniform as that first night they met at the hotel in the old Portuguese fort, when she'd been with the NGO just a few weeks and was still keen to prove something — to herself or to them, she wasn't sure. She had guessed it was him right away, there in the bar, smoking a cigarette and drinking a glass of whisky, with his broad forehead and closely cropped hair, face a little squashed down by worry, it seemed to her. He was younger than she had expected, a few years older than her maybe, and handsome, too. He'd known at once what she wanted from him — a pass into the interior. It was the same thing everyone wanted from him. "There's no point in my granting it," he had told her, not unkindly. "You're bound to fail. All will fail."

Now he had sunglasses on his forehead and a white silk scarf wrapped round his neck. It made him look a little raffish, even out here. Had he worn it for her, she wondered? He requested the co-ordinates she had for the aquifer. She gave him them, saying, "Thanks a million", though they both knew their chances of finding the fabled water source — the subterranean layer of water-bearing rock that might change the fate of this so-called desert island, off the East African coast, depending on which of the competing authorities would be the first to find it — were slim.

Their small convoy crept out the city, along dusty roads, then a dried riverbed. A walkie-talkie and a canteen of water rolled about in a trough between her and Xin.

Piles of dry brushwood crackled under the Jeep's tyres. There was no wind today: even the breeze produced by the passage of the vehicle itself was stifling. The plastic covering on the aerial of Xin's walkie-talkie seemed to be melting.

As they passed some thorn trees on a bank of dry grass, at which goats were nibbling, the billy raised its head to stare at them. She suddenly became strongly aware how little she knew Xin, despite the many evenings they had spent together in the bar of the old fort. Evenings when she'd told him about her life in Ireland, where she'd tried so hard at school, and studied for a degree in water science in Dublin, not as far away from her parents in Kerry as she'd have liked, and how she was surprised when the staggered shadows thrown by clouds passing at intervals over the island made her homesick. Evenings when he'd told her about his life in Macau, where his grandmother was a senior figure in politics and he, as a result of the adjacent privileges her position brought, became something of a wastrel: a drunk, a gambler, a driver of fast red cars. He'd wanted to be a pop star, he'd told her, with a grin that showed his teeth, slightly pointed, but he couldn't sing. The fun ended when his grandmother fell into disgrace, and then he joined the army.

They came to a spit of land where dry grass had caught fire, then been choked off by sand, leaving a small area of black stubble, in some parts still smouldering. Soon the riverbed petered out and they entered the desolation of the dunes proper, the two vehicles climbing up and falling down the yellow immensities like insects.

At one point, mounting another vast pile of sand, the truck behind got stuck. Xin picked up his walkie-talkie and spoke into it.

They waited outside as the soldiers dug the vehicle out, cigarettes jutting from mouths as they angled in spades and strutted metal boards, rolled wire netting up the incline. It took over an hour.

"Drift-sand," said Xin, as they got back in the Jeep. "That's the worst."

She accustomed herself again to the throb of the engine as they resumed their wriggle up the same massive dune. They stopped at the crest. She was struck by the absence of wildlife — none of the island's famous giant lizards here, not even beetles or flies. She thought of clouds of blackfly in the Well Field back home, buzzing species of meadow flower that had resisted extinction since ancient days.

Pausing, Xin took off his sunglasses and put binoculars to his eyes. There were no tracks, only vacancy.

"You do realise," he said, "that it's very unlikely we will find any sign of water."

"Everyone keeps saying that. But I have to try." She looked across the empty sweeps of sand. "I was surprised that you agreed, Xin."

He was silent for a moment. "Did you not want me to come?"

"I didn't say that. Just thought you would keep saying no."

He shifted uneasily in the driver's seat. "There's a difference between preferring not to get involved and being happy alone.

But I could lose my job granting this pass, escorting you."

"I understand that very well," she said, slowly.

She looked at the sulphurous sand ahead, the great space seeming to lay itself out as a willing scapegoat under the sun. Behind, the gear changes of the truck came loud — individually distinguishable, like someone arguing with themselves.

They crept on for most of a day, not stopping for lunch, instead eating from a large packet of hard, bland biscuits as they drove, and drinking water from the canteen that tasted of iron and fire and its own perished rubber seal.

The heat from the Jeep engine burned the soles of her feet through her thin boots. The heat from the sun burned her thighs through her canvas trousers. The wind began to rise. It was too hot to keep the windows closed for long but when they weren't, sand blew into her face, scratching her eyelids.

"We better stop," Xin said, as they crested another belt of dunes. "The wind is getting very strong. Best get down low if a storm comes."

They descended the next dune at an angle, the chassis of the Jeep seeming to flex from side to side as it skidded. The sand streamed next to them in little rivulets, like imitation water.

"Perhaps we should go back," said Alice.

"It was you who wanted to come." He gestured over the sand, now unbroken and featureless, level as linen all around them. "I hope you're not disappointed in what you find."

"Find what? There's nothing. I was expecting..." Her voice trailed off. She felt overwhelmed and, again, vulnerable. It struck her that were she not with him, she would be so lost.

Looking again at the sand, which seemed to shift in the haze, she realised that she was wrong about there being nothing. Where, just minutes ago, there was sand that had appeared completely smooth, now were bars, ribs, definitive patterns. Peaking and troughing along their run, they looked like skeletal remains: more exactly, they looked like diagrams of the spinal cords of antediluvian creatures, laid out for evaluation in a textbook.

Yet because of the rising wind, there was also a sense of incipient movement, a feeling that these vast skeletons were on the point of waking up from centuries of sleep.

Above the patterns, a stripe of black cloud was rumbling towards them. Blown sand again pricked Alice's eyelids. Behind the cloud lay the horizon of night, also advancing.

"Come," said Xin, "we should eat before the storm." He picked up the walkie-talkie, shouted into it in Chinese.

Shortly afterwards they halted. Taking a petrol stove out of the truck, the soldiers cooked up, astonishingly quickly, a meal of black tea and polished rice and slices of processed meat. The meat tin was mostly covered with Chinese characters, but there was another, overprinted label that read "Henan Pork" in English. Henan's a place, Xin told her. Both the meat and the rice were white as milk and had practically no taste.

"I hate the feeling of sand in my mouth," she said. "And on my face."

Yet squatting down next to Xin, watching him scoop up food, a slight movement for a body she knew to be capable of leaps, feats of strength, aggressions, Alice was content, in spite of the sand grains peppering her face. Apart from the sound of their utensils and the odd comment from the soldiers, eating their own meal a little distant, there was a couple-like quiet between them.

Once they had finished — the slices of tasteless pork were extremely regular in shape; she imagined the machine that cut them, in faraway Henan, satisfying itself on one slice before moving on to the next — Xin ordered that tents be erected in the lee of the vehicles. The soldiers did this no less speedily than they had prepared the food. Soon there were three white tents up: one large square one for the soldiers and two small triangular ones for Alice and Xin. All these were guyed with weights, pegs being useless in sand.

"You should take shelter now," Xin said, with an iron smile. "Try to sleep. We will aim to reach the site tomorrow."

"Good night."

She went inside her tent, the fabric of which was being stirred by the rising wind. As darkness fell, the storm took hold of the camp, dense flurries of sand wrenching the canvas of the tents.

She lay still, looking through flapping fabric at the moonlight. It seemed to eddy as the sand disclosed light differently with each blow, altering second by second, now fat, like a bright white cow on the material, now thin, a starveling creature, now something else, and something else again, each kinetic image caught in a wrinkle of time.

A few hours passed, during which she might have slept, but also intermittently woke. Alice was lying there with a sore throat, dry eyes that saw nothing — the patterns had gone to black, light being swallowed in the depths of the storm — when the unclarified fear threatened to overwhelm her. Her heart seemed to stop, just for an instant, and she sat up with a start.

Visibility was almost down to nil, but she could just see the figure of the Captain in his tent, crouched up, illuminated by a lamp — hung from a cord, it must be. She ran over in bare feet and →

Photograph, previous pages: Getty

unzipped it. He was wearing black socks, she noticed, but apart from having removed his more serious boots was clothed exactly as before.

"Can I sleep here?" she asked him, not knowing quite why.

He looked at her, again the expression she couldn't read. "If you're sure."

They moved awkwardly around one another in the tiny space, revolving on the groundsheet until she was able to find a small space and sit down. He did the same, shuffling off a foam mat and passing it to her, before rolling into his sleeping bag.

"I'll be all right," she said, trying to pass him back the foam mat, the ends of which were curling up.

"Please," he replied. "The desert gets very cold at night."

There was very little in the tent: a small khaki valise, with zipped compartments; some extra uniform; a canteen of water. A head-torch, hanging from a hook in the middle of the tent, like she'd thought. The only other light came from the purplish display of his walkie-talkie, which was switched on, emitting a soft hiss of static.

He was watching her look around the tent, she realised. She returned his gaze.

"Do you mind if I turn off the light?" he asked. "We might need the battery."

"OK," Alice said. Then: "Look, the moonlight has come back."

Wind-carried sand, handfuls of white diamonds in the moonlight, had begun striking the tent, making a dry, rolling noise. She turned — saw the silhouette of his face and felt a strong desire to kiss him. It seemed to her as if Xin also wanted that, the way he angled his head almost imperceptibly towards her. Perhaps their evenings together at the fort — the conversations that surprised them both, the ease that had grown between them — had always been heading towards this. Perhaps, also, the vastness of the desert night was just too much for both of them.

She cleared her throat, which felt like an egg-timer, so much sand had run down it during the day, and said: "I don't usually permit strange men to kiss me."

"How about now?" he murmured.

They lay there for a while afterwards, breathing together as one, her hair across his face, his hand in the small of her back. Outside, the storm was moving on, setting up its big top in another place. But she could still just feel him inside her, a flicker, a commotion of the blood. At least she thought so.

Shortly afterwards came another pulse: a mechanical tone burst on his walkie-talkie. He rolled away under her, picked up the radio; listened; pressed the talk button; said something forceful in Chinese. Another voice replied, no less urgent sounding. He quickly got dressed and went outside, continued speaking to his interlocutor.

SHE WOKE IN A FIT OF BREATHLESSNESS. The heat of the tent was a prison. No one else inside. Panicked, she dressed — emerging into sunlight so bright it made her want to clap hands over her eyes. Her belly, her thighs, felt crusty; she wished there were water in which to wash. No sign of Xin.

The soldiers were packing their big tent into the truck. She looked for Xin in the ocean of sand, finally spotting him on a small incline. In uniform, present and correct now, he was inspecting the montage of dunes through binoculars.

She wanted to hold him again. He let the binoculars drop on their cord, turned to her as she approached.

"Good morning," he said, unsmiling, as if last night had not been real. He seemed preoccupied.

"What are you looking at?" Behind them, she heard the clank of tins as the soldiers began making coffee.

"The configuration of the dunes has shifted because of the storm," he said, not looking at her. "I was looking at something beyond, in line with those trees. Here."

"Do you think we've found it?"

Xin said nothing. She lifted the binoculars to sore eyes. She saw three small palm trees, about a mile off. About 200 yards in front, riding like a ship on one of the dunes, was a military vehicle.

"A Land Rover!" she said.

"Don't think so. But something similar. Maybe a Jeep. We will go take a look."

He went back, got a rifle and a canteen of water from one of the soldiers and they started walking towards the vehicle. They progressed in silence.

As they came closer, it became clear that it was not a Land Rover, or a Jeep, but a small military truck, smaller than the one that had carried the Chinese soldiers, and of much older vintage.

"How did it get here?"

"Driven, of course. Very long time ago."

"I can see that."

A red star was once painted on the bonnet. Russian. This, and the remnants of green paint covering the truck, had flaked and faded under long years of sun. The canvas flaps on its sides had hardened to the consistency of tree bark. Its wheels and lower body were sunk in deep.

189

Because of the sand, it was impossible to open either of the doors. Xin didn't even try, instead grabbing the rim of the cab roof, hauling himself up one of the inclines of yellow sand into which the vehicle was buried, so his eyes were level with the driver's seat.

"There's someone there," Xin said.

"No!"

"A body."

She pulled herself up, joining Xin at the not-quite closed window, the glass of which was pitted by years of sandstorms. It was the remains of a man, his desiccated body and army uniform embalmed by the sun and blown sand, which half-filled the cab; he was lying on the double seat with his booted feet up, crossed, and his back against the door opposite.

His skull was packed with sand. It flowed from his wide eyes and his too-large nostrils and his unquenched throat down onto his lap. The heat and glare made the horror of his face — the grinning jaw, the hair still thick on his skull — too much for Alice to comprehend. She looked at the body dumbly.

"A Russian soldier from long ago, when they too tried to control this place," Xin supposed. "Like I have said, all will fail. Anyway, we need to get back."

"But what about the co-ordinates? We have not even got there yet!"

Xin looked at her for a moment. This time, his eyes were dull.

"Can you not hear what he is saying?" he said, flatly.

"What do you mean?" She felt a plunge inside.

"He's telling you the same thing I did. We were foolish to come."

He turned and walked back to the vehicle without looking around. Side by side in his Jeep again, they sat in near silence, and it seemed hard to imagine that they had once spoken freely. As they drove back down the dunes, following their own tyre tracks, but not too closely, Alice thought of their first meeting in the bar in the old fort, when she'd asked for the permit, and Xin had told her she would fail.

"Why?" she had asked him.

"The same reason the Portuguese who built this fort failed. And the other foreign powers, like the Russians who fought here in the 1980s. And you British, who were the biggest failures of all, despite what your leaders now say."

"I'm Irish," she'd told him — playfully, she hoped — as they stood on the parapet, watching the sun track down over the city. The truth, she felt, was no great connection, neither to family nor nation.

"My apologies," he had said with a smile. "And now the South Africans running the western side of this island on behalf of the UN. Us too, in our own sector. It's the same as it ever was. The whole circus. Wherever invasions happen, local populations eventually self-determine. And after that, when evolution has its way in the future, who knows? New forms of domination — maybe those giant monitor lizards who keep biting my soldiers? Bad infection!"

Xin had chuckled, looking into her eyes over the rim of his glass. "No, I'm pulling your legs."

"Leg," she had laughed. "But… about that permit?"

He had shaken his head. "I'm sorry."

It was late in the afternoon when they pulled up in front of her bungalow. The excursion into the desert had taken the better part of two days, but it felt somehow longer. Now, at homecoming, the light seemed different. Unfamiliar. Xin leaned across and kissed her on the cheek, but he did not look at her, and when she had pushed closed the heavy door of the Jeep and turned back to look at him through its window, he was already moving away. She did not see him again.

MANY YEARS LATER, WHEN THE GIRL WAS GROWN, she would ask Alice about her father. Alice would draw a finger across the map on the wall by the kitchen table and trace the outline of the island. She would tell the girl about their evenings on the parapet of the fort, leaning side by side as they looked out over the island city. She would tell her about their trip to the desert, about the dunes that shifted like strange animals. She would tell the girl about the admiral who brought the aircraft carrier, *Zheng He*, and claimed the island in totality for China, and how she had read that Captain Xin had been sent home in disgrace, she wasn't sure why, although not in so much disgrace as his grandmother. She would tell her that, despite all the rumours and the speculation and the expeditions much bigger than their own, water was never found on the island, and how, after some years, the Chinese, too, abandoned it.

When the girl asked what her father looked like, she would tell her about the coffee-coloured uniform, and the dark hair and broad forehead that were also hers. And she would tell the girl about her father's pointed teeth, and the time before she knew him, when he liked fast cars. But she would not tell her that she could not remember what his face looked like, and that when she imagined him at night, his head angled towards her in the moonlight, it was no longer Xin's face that she saw, but the Russian soldier's, and that as he smiled at her, from the dark cavities of his eye sockets flowed two thin streams of sand. ○

GILES FODEN

Lifestyle essentials

Enchanté Communication – Global Fashion Brand Feature of the Year Interview with Jonq-Jin Kuo from Vivvant London

Jonq-Jin Kuo
Founder of Vivvant London
Enchanté Communication – USA

"Step into the shoes of the London gentleman with Vivvant London"

The quintessentially British home to gentleman, London has inspired generations for decades with its influence seeping into every inch of pop culture. The Founder of the luxury shoe label Vivvant London, Jonq-Jin Kuo, was no exception to this rule. Originally from Taipei, Jin swapped out his financial career for the allure of London's fashion scene. Gaining experience working at Selfridges, Jin shared his observations on British style through his blog in his spare time. His views didn't go unnoticed as he received a book deal and published the style guide, 'Dress Like a Londoner'. After observing, altering, and teaching men how to dress, it was time to give them the basics to do it with and so, Vivvant was born.

Vivvant's tagline reads, where the modern gentleman is headed and sticks to this direction. The modern gentleman is busy and needs footwear to match his lifestyle, from the office to the pub for drinks or out to a concert, one shoe has to fit each need and this is what Vivvant London excels at. "We currently sell four styles of boots and one trainer. They're designed in such a way that they can easily be dressed up or down, making them versatile while not having to sacrifice style", says Jin.

The Founder's – and editor's – personal favourite is the Trucker Boot, confirming that there aren't enough boots fashioned in navy and proving that navy boots are a must-have item every fashionable gentleman needs in 2022.

"You should never sacrifice comfort for style or the other way round. From an aesthetic point of view, there is no right or wrong but when you look at the quality, that's where you can tell the difference, and where lies the real shoe faux-pas for me. You can have the nicest design, but if the quality of leather or vegan leather is subpar, the entire shoe is ruined, says Jin"

Enchanté Editor's Pick – Vivvant London

1. Snowdon Camel Suede Military Boots

2. Brion Brown Patina Chelsea Boots

3. Urban Off White Leather Sneakers

4. Alexis Blue Patina Jodhpur Boots

5. Oliver Black Oxford Shoes

Enchanté Communication
PR & Advertisement Director: Xavier Tan Jiang Hoe
Fashion Editor: Lupe Baeyens
Founder of Vivvant London: Jonq-Jin Kuo
Shoes Collection: Vivvant London
Editor: Bessy Huang Director/Photographer: Yanle Shen
Stylist: Alice Secchi Art Director: Jiao Ling Producer: Heartj Wang
Hair & Make Up: Chieh-Ping Lee Model: Earl James & Jobey Mitchell
Set: Yuan Gu Stylist Assistant: V.Rosalia, Mutombo-Cartie
Special Thanks: Airui Li, Junjie Pang, Haowen Yang & Wenhao Xie
For more information, please visit:
Vivvant London Instagram: @vivvant
Instagram: @houseofenchante
Email: info@enchantecommunication.com
Website: www.enchantecommunication.com

Lifestyle essentials

Enchanté Communication – Global Fashion Brand Feature of the Year Interview with Mousbah Moghrabi for MOUSBAH MOGHRABI

Mousbah Moghrabi
Founder of Mousbah Moghrabi
Enchanté Communication – London

"Stitching together British craftsmanship and artistic design in a one-of-a-kind story"

Mousbah Moghrabi works exclusively with fabrics that are supplied to one of the last remaining ateliers in the UK, in Cheshire, where every suit is hand made featuring the traditional full canvas construction, the hallmark of Saville Row suits.

"The atelier has existed for over 100 years, they learnt their craft from Italians and have since then passed it on. The artisans working there have been refining their skills for years, and this is reflected in the impeccable quality. Fully canvassed suits are a very laborious project, the canvas is made from horsehair, allowing it to be bouncy and this is what allows the suit to mould to your body over time without losing its structure. It is the big tell-all of what distinguishes a good suit from an immaculate suit," says the designer. Yet it doesn't stop there, from the full canvas construction to the smaller details, everything is accounted for. Mousbah adds: "Some details don't carry benefits in terms of the fit of the suit, but they have a more beautiful and aesthetic advantage while also showcasing the art of design. For instance, all our buttonholes are hand-sewn and the buttons, hand-stitched. A treat for a trained eye. Crafting just one suit can take up to 40 hours, not even accounting for the artwork, to put that into context, it would take an entire working week to finish a single suit, that's how you know the quality is of the highest level," says Mr Moghrabi.

A Mousbah Moghrabi suit is fit for any occasion, from business attire to leisure with flamboyance only one pocket-square away. "I thought to myself, If I were a billionaire, I'd want a closet full of suits with eccentric linings, so essentially I started creating my dream collection with the hope somebody else would be interested too. All suits are tailored to perfection, mould the body exquisitely and have an eccentric touch. With every suit we launch, we aim to cater to versatility, while not compromising on quality or creativity," says Mr Moghrabi.

Mousbah Moghrabi adds his name to the slinking list of British suit designers. He solidifies the statement 'it's what's on the inside that counts' with his unique lining and traditional full canvas construction. A celebration of art, craft and British heritage at its finest.

Exclusive London Pop-Up Invitation in Collaboration with The Koppel Project: Venue: 125 New Bond Street Date: 30th & 31st May 2022

Enchanté Editor's Pick – Mousbah Moghrabi Edition

1. Navy Blue "Neptune" Suit Jacket

2. Black Paint Printed Silk Twill Shirt

3. Navy Blue Suit Trousers

4. Grey Flannel Waistcoat

5. Black Paint Tie

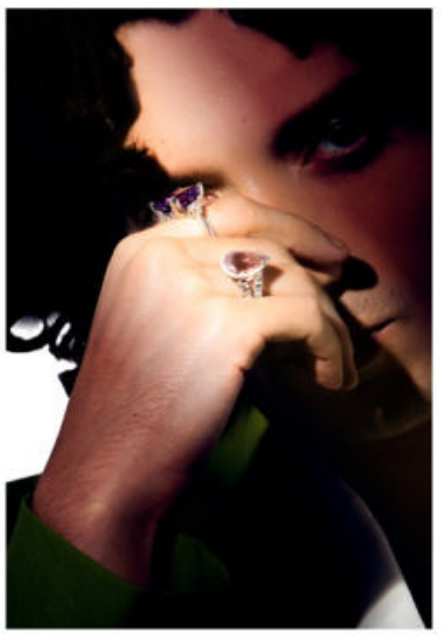
Enchanté Communication
PR & Advertisement Director: Xavier Tan Jiang Hoe
Fashion Editor: Lupe Baeyens
Founder of Mousbah Moghrabi: Mousbah Moghrabi
Men's Collection: Mousbah Moghrabi

For more information, please visit:
Mousbah Moghrabi Website: www.mousbahmoghrabi.com
Instagram: @houseofenchante
Email: info@enchantecommunication.com
Website: www.enchantecommunication.com

Lifestyle essentials

Enchanté Communication – Global Fashion Brand Feature of the Year Interview with Jarilyn Lim Russo from Jarilyn Jewelry

Jarilyn Lim Russo
Founder of Jarilyn Jewelry
Enchanté Communication – USA



"Take the courage to turn your passion into action. The unknown can be scary at times, but do not let any fear or others deter you, as we only live once"

Jarilyn Jewelry is all about the celebration of love – in any form – placing it at the centre of everything Jarilyn pours her heart into. Soon Jarilyn shifted gears and pursued one of her first passions: skincare. "I always listen to my heart, when I was younger, I didn't do that. I had regrets and struggles so decided to take my life into my own hands and pursue my passions. When I packed up my life to follow my dreams, I was very scared. However, I started getting compliments, saw improvements on my client's skin who soon after turned into friends. This gave me the confidence and resolution to keep going and have an open mind to new ventures and opportunities. The satisfaction I received from the daily encounters with my clients was unparalleled, so phenomenal. I came to realise that life can be so much more enjoyable if you just follow your heart and look where I am now." says Founder Jarilyn Lim.

Although we might get lost in the world of passion, love and craftsmanship, achieving the level of expertise Jarilyn Jewelry offers, is no easy feat. "I am a perfectionist, a true Virgo. Since we don't focus on mass production, gemstone quality and sourcing are our most important pillars. All my gem setting is done by hand and overseen by me. I work very closely together with a team of experts, who ensure everything is done ethically and to the highest standard of quality," says Jarilyn. Due to this extreme attention to detail and flawlessness, the creation of a single piece of jewellery, such as her 'Love of Sunset' can take up to 6 months, ensuring every piece is intertwined with patience, craftsmanship and above all, love.

Enchanté Editor's Pick – Jarilyn Jewelry Edition

1. For the Love of Pearl; the green sapphire are detachable

2. Jarilyn Jewelry Signature: Love Clicks

3. The Hummingbird's Love

4. Jarilyn Jewelry Collection: For the Love of Halo Baguette

5. Jarilyn Jewelry Collection: The Melody of Love

Enchanté Communication
PR & Advertisement Director: Xavier Tan Jiang Hoe
Fashion Editor: Lupe Baeyens
Founder of Jarilyn Jewelry: Jarilyn Lim Russo
Jewelry Collection: Jarilyn Jewelry
Photographer: Courtney Phillip

Art Direction: FUJIZAKI
Styling: FUJIZAKI
Models: Lee Bridgeman, Eliott Tipp
Models Agencies: Storm Management
Make Up Artist: Madeleine Feeney

For more information, please visit:
Jewelry Website: www.jarilynjewelrycarmel.com
Instagram: @houseofenchante
Email: info@enchantecommunication.com
Website: www.enchantecommunication.com

Lifestyle essentials

Avail Watches

AVAIL is quicky disrupting the watch market in the UK by combining outstanding design, premium materials and quality craftmanship to create statement watches for men and all without typical industry mark-ups; proving that well-made, stylish watches do not need to cost the earth.
With its 'Collection Range' starting at just £45, its 'NATO Range' starting at £70 and its premium 'Signature Range' starting at £75, AVAIL is the perfect place to find your next timepiece, or the perfect Father's Day Gift.

Receive 15% off across the store with code: ESQUIRE (expires 30/06/22)
Shop: www.availwatches.co.uk
IG: @availwatches
Shot: Jay Cole @criticalcreations

Fold Roll Backpack by Utility Archive

This roll-top typifies Utility Archive's modern, sustainable design language, where function, ergonomics, protection and organisation combine in the perfect all-round daypack.
Efficiently constructed from only three body panels, the minimal exterior of this roll-top backpack conceals a comprehensive feature list: waterproof fabric, raw aluminium hardware, padded laptop sleeve, three concealed exterior pockets and a reflective logo.

utilityarchive.com
@utilityarchive

Backstage

Excerpts and out-takes from the pages of Esquire

Producing a shoot inspired by the style of Elvis Presley is not as easy as it might appear. It's not just a case of hiring a wig and some rhinestones — although certainly that is part of it. One needs to walk a line between homage and pastiche. On the morning of *Esquire*'s fashion shoot in this issue, when stylist Luke Day, photographer Mariano Vivanco and I, in my role as style director, were going through the clothes, accessories and proposed hair and makeup, I mentioned how remarkable it was that Elvis managed to pull off the jaw-length sideburns. "Because he had the most perfect face of all time!" said Vivanco. That's one of the many fascinating things about Elvis. Yes, he may have inspired a worldwide subculture of comic impersonators, but he remains among the most stylish — and best looking — men in modern history.

"Elvis was my male idol when I was young," remembers Day, who is something of a style icon himself. "I dyed my hair black and had a quiff when I was at university, and I still think of him as a visual reference whenever I wear a Hawaiian shirt or full-leather look — which is more often than you might think."

Day's brief was to interpret the spring/summer 2022 menswear collections through Elvis-tinted glasses, and though it may seem a long time since the star's midcentury-American look was the height of fashion, it turned out to be fairly easy to translate the now into the then. See the purple suede cowboy jacket, a highlight of Gucci's latest collection, or the jumpsuit from Louis Vuitton, a creation of the late Virgil Abloh: not a designer often linked with Elvis. Day even managed to give Prada the Graceland treatment, which is no mean feat.

"I loved reimagining my favourite era of Elvis — late 1960s/early '70s — for this shoot but reinterpreted with modern designer clothes," he says. "Elvis was a pioneer of pushing gender boundaries before the term was even coined. Elvis ran so Harry Styles could walk." ○

All hail The King: Elvis wears pink silk jumpsuit, £2,540, by Gucci. Vintage sunglasses, price on request, by General Eyewear. Ivory silk scarf, £165, by Rockins. TCB ring (left hand), £20, by Elvis Belts. 18k gold bracelet (right hand), £13,900, by Stephen Webster

Words by Charlie Teasdale | Mariano Vivanco

VOLVO

The shape of things to come.
100% electric C40 Recharge

274 mile range. Google built in. Pixel Light Technology. With our new leather-free fabric made from sustainable materials, redefining luxury. Meet the future of Volvo Cars: the fully electric C40 Recharge.

Fuel consumption and Emissions for the Volvo C40 Recharge: WLTP electric energy consumption 2.8 – 3.4 miles/kWh. Equivalent all electric range 252.3 – 274 miles.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare equivalent electric range figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. The Volvo C40 Recharge requires mains electricity for charging. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

cartier.com - 020 3147 4850

SANTOS
DE
Cartier